



"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone
who asks you for a reason for your hope"
1 Peter 3:15

Differences Between Catholics and Protestants

- Part I -

Birth of Protestantism

The Protestant Reformation – or Revolt took place in the 16th century and was largely a consequence of the actions of **Martin Luther**. Earlier predecessors to Protestantism like **John Wycliffe** in the 14th century and **Jan Hus** in the 15th century spoke out against the Church but never experienced the kind of following that Luther did.

Luther was an Augustinian monk who had difficulties with the Church's stance on the practice of Indulgences. He also had other ideas about the authority of Scripture and doctrines of faith that were of his own invention.

An Indulgence is the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin that has been forgiven. This is possible because of the power granted to the Church of the Keys of the Kingdom in **Matt. 16:18**. During Luther's day, there were some clerics who were "selling" Indulgences. At that time, it one could be granted an Indulgence for an act of monetary charity. Because of this, these clerics would state plainly that for a price, a person could be granted an Indulgence. This was an abuse.

One German priest, in particular named **Johann Tetzel** had a saying: ***“When a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from Purgatory springs”*** – thereby, “selling” a release from Purgatory. This was another grave abuse of the graces promised from charitable donations.

This is largely what eventually led to Luther nailing his so-called, **“95 Theses”** to the Cathedral door in Wittenburg. Not all of his 95 points were protests against the Church. Some of them were actually agreements, although, you’d be hard-pressed to find anybody willing to admit to that today.

Early on – Luther was more cautious in his approach towards the Church. He even wrote a letter to Pope Leo X expressing his love for the Church and apparent reluctance to break from it:

“I never approved of a schism, nor will I approve of it for all eternity. . . . That the Roman Church is more honored by God than all others is not to be doubted. St, Peter and St. Paul, forty-six Popes, some hundreds of thousands of martyrs, have laid down their lives in its communion, having overcome Hell and the world; so that the eyes of God rest on the Roman church with special favor. Though nowadays everything is in a wretched state, it is no ground for separating from the Church. On the contrary, the worse things are going, the more should we hold close to her, for it is not by separating from the Church that we can make her better.

We must not separate from God on account of any work of the devil, nor cease to have fellowship with the children of God who are still abiding in the pale of Rome on account of the multitude of the ungodly. There is no sin, no amount of evil, which should be permitted to dissolve the bond of charity or break the bond of unity of the body. For love can do all things, and nothing is difficult to those who are united.”

Martin Luther to Pope Leo X, January 6, 1519 - more than a year after the ***Ninety-Five Theses***, quoted in ***The Facts about Luther***, 356

Luther changes Scripture

However, as time went on, Luther became more obstinate and rebellious towards the Church. He rejected her doctrines and invented many of his own such as **Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone)** and **Sola Fide (Faith Alone)**. In fact, in his German translation of the Bible, he changed the wording of **Romans 3:28**, which reads:

“For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”

In order to match his newly-invented doctrine of Sola Fide - Luther ***changed*** this to read:

“For we consider that a person is justified by faith alone apart from works of the law.”

In reality – the only place in **ALL** of Scripture where the words “**faith alone**” appear together are in **James 2:24**, where it says “You see that a person is justified by works and **NOT BY FAITH ALONE**.”

Luther also chose to align himself with the *Post-Christ, Post-Temple* Old Testament Canon of Scripture. After the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, Jewish leaders decided to remove 7 Books from the Old Testament.

About 40 years after Jesus died and rose from the dead, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. The Temple was desecrated and *completely* destroyed. Jesus foretold that this was going to happen in **Mark 13: 1-4**.

Not long after this, a group of Rabbis asked permission from the Roman authorities to hold a Rabbinical school at **Jabneh** (or *Jamnia*). One of the things discussed was use of the Greek translation of the Old Testament (*the Septuagint*) by early Christians. The name, **Septuagint**", comes from the number of scholars (**70**) who translated the Hebrew texts into Greek.

At this gathering, they decided to eject **7 Books** (*and portions of Esther and Daniel*) that they felt were uninspired. They provided a new Greek translation because the early Christians were converting the Jews using the Septuagint, which was compiled about 200 years before the birth of Christ. According to historical sources, the rabbinical gathering at Jabneh was not even an *"official"* council with binding authority to make such a decision. It can be clearly shown that Jesus and the Apostles studied and quoted from these 7 Books. In the New Testament, we see over **100** references to them.

The main advocate for removing the 7 Deuterocanonical Books was **Rabbi Akiva**, who was also known for proclaiming that a man named **Simon Bar Kohkba** was the *real* Messiah during the 2nd Jewish revolt (circa 132 AD). So, Luther chose to go with a **POST-Christ, POST-Temple** Canon of Scripture that was declared by a **FALSE Prophet** who proclaimed a **FALSE “Christ”**. The reasons for his actions were twofold:

1. Keeping those 7 Books, which contain explicit Catholic doctrines such as prayers for the Dead and Purgatory would make it more difficult to rectify Catholic doctrine.
2. Removing the 7 Books would further divorce him from the Catholic Church.

Luther also had problems with many New Testament Books, which he sought to remove. The Book of **Hebrews**, the Epistles of **James** and **Jude** and the Book of **Revelation** were **ALL** on the chopping block. He referred to the Epistle of James as the **“Epistle of Straw”** because it stressed the importance of works, which he rejected. If it had not been for the urging of his contemporaries – men like **Philip Melancton** – Protestant Bibles would have been **MUCH** thinner.

At this point, Luther's writings became more and more rebellious and obstinate. Regarding his editing of Scripture, he wrote the following:

“If I, Dr. Luther, had thought that all the Papists together were capable of translating even one passage of Scripture correctly and well, I would have gathered up enough humility to ask for their aid and assistance in translating the New Testament into German.”

“If your Papist wishes to make a great fuss about the word "alone" (sola), say this to him: ‘Dr. Martin Luther will have it so and he says that **a papist and an ass are the same thing**.’”

“Please do not give these asses any other answer to their useless braying about that word "sola" than simply ‘Luther will have it so, and he says that **he is a doctor above all the papal doctors**.’”

“I know quite well how much skill, hard work, understanding and intelligence is needed for a good translation. **They know it less than even the miller's donkey for they have never tried it.**

“You tell me what a great fuss the Papists are making because the word alone is not in the text of Paul...say right out to him: ‘**Dr. Martin Luther will have it so,**’...I will have it so, and I order it to be so, and **my will is reason enough**. I know very well that the word 'alone' is not in the Latin or the Greek”

And finally, he admitted adding the word 'alone' to **Rom. 3:28** of his own volition:

“If your Papist annoys you with the word ('alone'), tell him straightway, ‘Dr. Martin Luther will have it so’: ***Papist and ass are one and the same thing.*** Whoever will not have my translation, let him give it the go-by: the devil's thanks to him who censures it without my will and knowledge. Luther will have it so, and he is a doctor above all the doctors in Popedom.” **(Amic. Discussion, 1, 127, 'The Facts About Luther,' O'Hare, TAN Books, 1987, p. 201.)**

Luther's rebellion began to spawn other sects and “denominations” with varying doctrines based on the personal interpretations of their founders. His frustration is evident in the following letter:

"There are almost as many sects and beliefs as there are heads; this one will not admit baptism; that one rejects the Sacrament of the altar; another places another world between the present one and the day of judgment; some teach that Jesus Christ is not God. *There is not an individual, however clownish he may be, who does not claim to be inspired by the Holy Ghost, and who does not put forth as prophecies his ravings and dreams.*"
(Martin Luther, Christians at Antwerp, 1525)

Luther the “**reformer**” had become Luther the *revolutionary*; his religious agitation became a political rebellion. Luther taught that:

- The Bible is the **only** source of faith; it contains the plenary inspiration of God; its reading is invested with a quasi-sacramental character.
- Human nature has been totally corrupted by original sin, and man, accordingly, is deprived of free will. Whatever he does, be it good or bad, is not his own work, but God's.
- Faith alone can work justification, and man is saved by confidently believing that God will pardon him. This includes a full pardon of sin, and an unconditional release from its penalties.
- The hierarchy and priesthood are not Divinely instituted or necessary, and ceremonial or exterior worship is not essential or useful. Ecclesiastical vestments, pilgrimages, mortifications, monastic vows, prayers for the dead, intercession of saints, avail the soul nothing.
- All sacraments, with the exception of baptism, Holy Eucharist, and penance, are rejected, but their absence may be supplied by faith.
- The priesthood is universal; every Christian may assume it. An ordained priesthood is both unnecessary and a usurpation.
- There is no visible Church or one specially established by God whereby men may work out their salvation.

Luther eventually married an ex-nun named **Katharina von Bora**, to the uneasiness of some of his friends, like Philip Melancton. They had six children. In his own words, Luther stated that his marriage would *“. . . please his father, rile the pope, cause the angels to laugh, and the devils to weep.”*

Following Luther's bold acts, many other men took stands against the Church throughout Europe during the 16th century and beyond. Luther didn't wind up straying as far from Catholic doctrine as many of his contemporaries and successors did. Men like **John Calvin** of Luther's time rejected many essential Catholic doctrines while *inventing* many of their own based on their personal interpretations of Scripture.

This splintering continues to this day to the tune of tens of thousands of disjointed and perpetually-splintering Protestant sects that **ALL** teach *different* doctrines while **ALL** claiming to have been “led” by the Holy Spirit based on the personal interpretations of their founders.

It is important to remember that our Lord built **ONE** Church and prayed for the unity of that **ONE** Church at the Last Supper – that they remain as **ONE** – as He and the Father are **ONE (John 17:20-23)**.

Lutherans, Anglicans and Episcopalians are a bit closer in doctrinal beliefs to Catholicism. For example, they have a belief in the Eucharist. The difference is, whereas, Catholics believe in **Transubstantiation** – these groups believe in **Consubstantiation**.

Transubstantiation is the belief that although the *appearances* of bread and wine still exist – the **substance** is completely transformed to the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. **Consubstantiation**, on the other hand, is the belief that the bread and wine still exist *alongside* the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Anglican Church was originally known as the **Catholic Church of England** during the reign of **Henry VIII** in the 16th century. He formally broke away from the Catholic Church when he was denied a Declaration of Nullity (Annulment) from one of his many wives - and heavily persecuted Catholics who remained faithful to the Pope. The Anglican Church also has a hierarchy of Priests and Bishops, similar to the Catholic Church.

The Episcopal Church is a member of the **Worldwide Anglican Communion** and is largely based in the United States. However, it does have dioceses in other countries.

Like many other mainstream Protestant groups – **Lutherans** believe that humans are saved from their sins by God's grace alone (Sola Gratia), through faith alone (Sola Fide) in Christ alone (Sola Christus), on the basis of Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura).

On the other hand, whereas Catholics believe in the Authority of Scripture - we also believe, as Scripture teaches (**2 Thess. 2:15**), that **Sacred Tradition** is binding on us. Catholics believe that we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ – and that this faith is manifested by **belief + works/obedience**.

In 1999, the Catholic Church, under **St. John Paul II**, entered into a ***Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*** with the Lutheran Church. The Catholic Church's position was that although we could agree that justification was by faith alone – it must be understood that faith and works go hand-in-hand. True faith is not simply belief (**James 2:19**) – it is love and obedience in action, as Scripture teaches (**Matt. 7:21, 1 Co. 13:13, Gal. 5:6, James 2:19-24**).

Protestantism is largely based on the “**Five Solas**” of the Reformation:

1. **Sola Gratia** - The belief that we are saved by ***Grace Alone***
2. **Sola Fide** - The idea that we are saved by ***Faith Alone***
3. **Sola Christus** - The believe that we are saved by ***Christ Alone***
4. **Sola Scriptura** - The idea that ***Scripture Alone*** is our Sole Authority
5. **Sola Deo Gloria** - The belief that every aspect of the Christian life is for the ***Glory of God Alone***

As Catholics, we pretty much agree with ***three*** of them:

1. Only by the Grace of God are we saved (**Eph. 2:8-9**). However – our ***cooperation*** with that grace is necessary for it to have an effect on us (**James 2:14-16**).
3. Christ is the **ONLY** way to salvation (**John 14:6**).
5. Our lives are to be lived for God’s glory (**1 Cor. 6:20, 10:31**).

However, there is **NO** contextual evidence in Scripture or Tradition for:

2. **Sola Fide**
4. **Sola Scriptura**

Although there are many doctrinal differences between the various Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church – there are many things that we agree upon and celebrate as Christians. For example – **ALL** Christians believe in the **Holy Trinity**, the **humanity** and **deity** of Christ, In **Incarnation**, the fact that Christ died for our sins, rose from the dead and ascended to the Father in Heaven.

We differ on other matters like **Authority**, the **Real Presence** of Christ in the Eucharist, the **Priesthood**, **Confession**, **Sola Scriptura**, **Marian Doctrines**, etc. It's interesting to note that there are almost as many differences among Protestants as there are between mainline Protestantism and Catholicism. For example, some Protestant denominations believe in **baptismal regeneration**, while others **do not**. Some believe in **soul-sleep**, while others **do not**.

Some believe in the **total depravity** of man, while others **do not**.

Some believe in the **Holy Trinity**, while others **do not**.

Some believe in doctrine of “**once saved, always saved**”, while others **do not**.

Some believe in a pre-tribulation “**Rapture**”, while others **do not**.

Some believe that only some were **predestined** for **heaven**, while others **do not**.

Some believe that some were **predestined** for **hell**, while others **do not**.

Some believe in a woman's right to choose **abortion**, while others **do not**.

Some believe that practicing **homosexuality** is a sin, while others **do not**.

Most believe in **contraception**, while others **do not** – and the list goes on.

Who started YOUR Church?

- If you worship **Cornerstone Church**, it was **founded by John C. Hagee** in May of **1975** in San Antonio, Texas. Since then, several other churches have adopted this name.
- If you are a believer at the **Vineyard Christian Fellowship**, your denomination was started by **Ken Gullickson and Keith Green** in Santa Monica, California in **1974**.
- If you are a member of **Calvary Chapel**, **Chuck Smith** began your congregation in Costa Mesa, California in **1965**.
- If you are a follower of the **Church of Scientology**, your group owes its origin to **L. Ron Hubbard** in Washington, D.C. in **1952**.
- If you are a worshipper at the **Iglesia in Cristo**, **Felix Manalao** instituted your sect in the in **1914**.
- If you are a disciple of the **Assemblies of God** or other splinter **Pentecostal** groups, “**Church of the Nazarene**”, “**Holiness Church**”, “**Pilgrim Holiness Church**”, your religion is one of the hundreds of new sects founded by **men** during **the 20th century**.
- If you are a **Christian Scientist**, your organization was brought into existence by **Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy** in **1879**.

- If you are a **Jehovah's Witness**, your church was established by **Charles Taze Russell** in Pennsylvania in **1879**.
- If you worship with the **Salvation Army**, your sect began with **William Booth** in London in **1865**.
- If you are a **Seventh Day Adventist**, **Mrs. Ellen Gould White** inaugurated your group in the in **1860**.
- If you are a **Mormon** (Latter Day Saints), your religion was organized in New York by **Joseph Smith** in **1830**.
- If you belong to the **Evangelical church** – it was founded in **1803** by **Jacob Albright**, s former Methodist.
- If you are a **Unitarian**, **Theophilus Lindley** founded your church in London in **1774**.
- If you are a **Methodist**, your form of Protestantism is credited to **John Wesley** in London in **1738**.
- If you are **Amish** – your group was founded in **1693** by **Jacob Amman**, a Swiss Bishop - a breakaway from the Mennonite church.
- If you are a **Quaker**, your denomination was founded in **1647** by **George Fox**, in England.
- If you are of the **Dutch Reformed** church, you recognize **Michaelis Jones** as founder, because he originated your religion in New York in **1628**.

- If you are a **Baptist**, you look to **John Smyth** as originator of your institution in Amsterdam in **1609**.
- If you are a **Congregationalist**, your religion was originated by **Robert Brown** in Holland in **1582**.
- If you are a **Presbyterian**, your religion was founded when **John Knox** brought the teachings of **John Calvin** to Scotland in the Year **1560**.
- If you belong to the **Church of England**, your religion was founded by **King Henry VIII** in the year **1534** because the Pope would not grant him a divorce with the right to remarry.
- If you are a **Mennonite**, your sect was founded by men, **Grebel**, **Mantz**, and **Blaurock**, in Switzerland, as an offshoot of the Anabaptists in 1521.
- If you belong to the **Anabaptist church** – your sect was founded by **Nicholas Storch**, and **Thomas Múnzer**, former Lutherans, in **1520**.
- If you are a **Lutheran**, your religion was founded by **Martin Luther**, an ex-monk of the Catholic Church, in the year **1517**.
- If you are a member of the **Orthodox Church** (Russian, Eastern or Greek), your church went into schism in **1054**.
- If you are a **Catholic**, your Church was founded in Jerusalem by **Jesus Christ** (**Acts 2, 1 Tim. 3:15**) with **Peter** as its first Pope (**Matt. 16:18-19, Luke 22:31-32, Jn. 21:15-17**) in the year **33 A.D.**

The Early Church Fathers on The Church

The Early Church Fathers believed that the Catholic Church was the one true Church, that it taught infallibly and that the clergy was made up of three ranks; bishop, priest, and deacon.

Ignatius of Antioch

Follow your bishop, every one of you, as obediently as Jesus Christ followed the Father. Obey your clergy too as you would the apostles; give your deacons the same reverence that you would to a command of God. Make sure that no step affecting the Church is ever taken by anyone without the bishop's sanction. The sole Eucharist you should consider valid is one that is celebrated by the bishop himself, or by some person authorized by him. Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be; just as, **wherever Jesus Christ is present, there is the Catholic Church** (*Letter to the Smyrneans* 8:2 [A.D. 110]).

In like manner let everyone respect the **deacons** as they would respect Jesus Christ, and just as they respect the **bishop** as a type of the Father, and the **presbyters** as the council of God and college of the apostles. **Without these, it cannot be called a Church.** I am confident that you accept this, for I have received the exemplar of your love and have it with me in the person of your bishop. His very demeanor is a great lesson and his meekness is his strength. I believe that even the godless do respect him (*Letter to the Trallians* 3:1-2 [A. D. 110]).

The Martyrdom of Polycarp

When finally he concluded his prayer, after remembering all who had at any time come his way – small folk and great folk, distinguished and undistinguished, and the whole **Catholic Church** throughout the world – the time for departure came. So they placed him on an ass, and brought him into the city on a great Sabbath (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 8 [A.D. 150]).

Irenaeus

The Catholic Church possesses one and the same faith throughout the whole world, as we have already said (*Against Heresies* 1:10 [A.D. 189]).

Since therefore we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers. On this account we are bound to avoid them, but to make choice of the things pertaining to the Church with the utmost diligence, and to lay hold of the tradition of the truth. (ibid. 3:4).

Tertullian

Where was Marcion then, that shipmaster of Pontus, the zealous student of Stoicism? Where was Valentinus then, the disciple of Platonism? For it is evident that those men lived not so long ago – in the reign of Antoninus for the most part – and that they at first were believers in the doctrine of the **Catholic Church, in the church of Rome under the episcopate of the blessed Eleutherus**, until on account of their ever restless curiosity, with which they even infected the brethren, they were more than once expelled (*On the Prescription Against Heretics* 22,30 [A.D.200])

Clement of Alexandria

A multitude of other pieces of advice to particular persons is written in the holy books: some for presbyters, some for bishops and deacons; and others for widows, of whom we shall have opportunity to speak elsewhere (*The Instructor of Children* 3:12:97:2 [pre-A.D. 202]).

Even here in the Church **the gradations of bishops, presbyters, and deacons** happen to be imitations, in my opinion, of the angelic glory and of that arrangement which, the Scriptures say, awaits those who have followed in the footsteps of the apostles and who have lived in complete righteousness according to the gospel (*Stromateis* 6:13:107:2 [post-A.D. 202]).

Hippolytus

When a deacon is to be ordained, he is chosen after the fashion of those things said above, the bishop alone in like manner imposing his hands upon him as we have prescribed. In the ordaining of a deacon, this is the reason why the bishop alone is to impose his hands upon him: He is not ordained to the priesthood, but to serve the bishop and to fulfill the bishop's command. He has no part in the council of the clergy, but is to attend to his own duties and is to acquaint the bishop with such matters as are needful. . . . On a presbyter [priest], however, let the presbyters impose their hands because of the common and like Spirit of the clergy. Even so, the presbyter has only the power to receive [the Spirit], and not the power to give [the Spirit]. **That is why a presbyter does not ordain the clergy; for at the ordaining of a presbyter, he but seals while the bishop ordains.** (*Apostolic Tradition* 9 [ca. A.D. 215]).

Origen

Not fornication only, but even marriages make us unfit for ecclesiastical honors; for neither a bishop, nor a presbyter, nor a deacon, nor a widow is able to be twice married (*Homilies on Luke*, 17 [ca. A.D. 235]).

Cyprian

The spouse of Christ cannot be defiled; she is uncorrupted and chaste. She knows one home . . . Does anyone believe that this unity which comes from divine strength, which is closely connected with the divine sacraments, can be broken asunder in the Church and be separated by the divisions of colliding wills? He who does not hold this unity, does not hold the law of God, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation (***On the Unity of the Catholic Church 6 [A.D. 251]***).

Peter speaks there, on whom the Church was to be built, teaching and showing in the name of the Church, that although a rebellious and arrogant multitude of those who will not hear or obey may depart, yet the Church does not depart from Christ; and they are the Church who are a people united to the priest, and the flock which adheres to its pastor. Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church, and that those flatter themselves in vain who creep in, not having peace with God's priests, and think that they communicate secretly with some; while the Church which is Catholic and one, is not cut nor divided, but is indeed connected and bound together by the cement of priests who cohere with one another (***Letters 66 [A.D. 253]***).