

THE HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Introduction

There is not a specific time or date that can be viewed as the beginning of the Catholic Church. It has taken centuries to develop to the point that it exists today. The roots of Catholicism go all the way back to the New Testament when the Apostle Paul wrote about a “falling away” or a departure from “the faith” (2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1). While the Catholic church was still several centuries in the making, the earliest departures from the teachings of the New Testament would lead to its development. The easiest way to trace much of the history of the Catholic Church is to trace the development of its doctrines. This study will investigate many of their prominent doctrines and their development over time. The dates given will be approximates since there is much debate over the exact dates of some of these events.

Errors in the Early Development of the Catholic Church

The Use of “Holy Water”- ca. A.D. 120

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, Leclercq states:

The use of holy water in the earliest days of the Christian Era is attested by documents of only comparatively late date. The "Apostolic Constitutions", the redaction of which goes back to about the year 400, attribute to the Apostle St. Matthew the precept of using holy water. The letter written under the name of Pope Alexander I, who lived in the second century, is apocryphal and of more recent times; hence the first historical testimony does not go back beyond the fifth century. However, it is permissible to suppose for the sake of argument that, in the earliest Christian times, water was used for expiatory and purificatory purposes, to a way analogous to its employment under the Jewish Law. As, in many cases, the water used for the Sacrament of Baptism was flowing water, sea or river water, it could not receive the same blessing as that contained in the baptisteries.

Leclercq goes on to state:

This water was perhaps blessed in proportion as it was needed, and the custom of the Church may have varied on this point. Balsamon tells us that, in the Greek Church, they "made" holy water at the beginning of each lunar month. It is quite possible that, according to canon 65 of the Council of Constantinople held in 691, this rite was established for the purpose of definitively supplanting the pagan feast of the new moon and causing it to pass into oblivion (Leclercq 432-433).

This water was considered holy because it had been “blessed” by a priest. The use of this water is a reflection of Old Testament practices, and is not mentioned in the New Testament (the law under which we live today). The only significance of water in the New Testament is the

practice of being immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; etc.). The waters of baptism are not “blessed” or special. Baptism is an act of obedience where God does the action of washing us with the blood of Christ.

Special Days Set Aside for Fasting- ca. A.D. 150

Regarding fasting, O’Neill states:

In the United States of America all the days of Lent; the Fridays of Advent (generally); the Ember Days; the vigils of Christmas and Pentecost, as well as those (14 Aug.) of the Assumption; (31 Oct.) of All Saints, are now fasting days. In Great Britain, Ireland, Australia and Canada, the days just indicated, together with the Wednesdays of Advent and (28 June) the vigil of Saints Peter and Paul, are fasting days. Fasting essentially consists in eating but one full meal in twenty-four hours and that about midday. It also implies the obligation of abstaining from flesh meat during the same period, unless legitimate authority grants permission to eat meat (O’Neill 790)

While fasting is definitely a New Testament practice (Acts 14:23; 27:33; 1 Cor. 7:5, etc.), there is no New Testament regulation on the times in which it must be practiced. To make such regulation would be binding where God has not bound.

Development of Regional Elders- ca. A.D. 150

The New Testament speaks of a plurality of elders being selected and appointed in every church (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5). There is no designation of an elder that had more authority than any other. Each congregation of the Lord’s church was to be autonomous and not under the rule of any other elders, or elder, in any other location. A.N. Trice stated in *The Bible versus Romanism*:

“I refer to the fact that while the church at Rome had in New Testament times a plurality of bishops or elders according to Divine appointment, later on a single bishop assumed authority over this church, just as was the case with the church at Alexandria, at Antioch, at Jerusalem, at Constantinople, these being appointed first by Constantine and clothed by him with civil authority as well as ecclesiastical rule. These offices developed under the lofty title of Patriarch, each being independent of all others in his own district. The idea of a Universal Bishop, Pope, or Vicar of Christ does not appear in the New Testament...(Trice 65-66)

Infant Baptism- ca. A.D. 180

The practice of infant baptism goes hand-in-hand with the idea of original sin. Harent states in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*: “Since Adam transmits death to his children by way of generation when he begets them mortal, it is by generation also that he transmits to them sin, for

the Apostle presents these two effects as produced at the same time and by the same causality” (Harent 312). Yet, Catholic teaching clearly contradicts the Bible itself. The Bible teaches that the soul that sins shall die, and it teaches that children do not inherit the sins of their father (Ez. 18:20ff). Young children do not carry the weight of sin because they are not yet accountable. It is when one becomes accountable that they have the capacity to sin (Rom. 7:9).

The Sign of the Cross- ca. A.D. 200

Touching specific places on the body to represent the cross is not something that has been regulated by the New Testament as there is no mention of it. Since the New Testament does not regulate it, no other group has the right to make a regulation where God has not (Prov. 30:6).

Seperation of Clergy and Laity- ca. A.D. 200

The teaching that only “clergy” have the right to study and teach God’s word is a foreign idea to the Scriptures. When one looks at New Testament examples, there are no distinctions made between these two groups. If the New Testament does not make a distinction, neither should anyone. All are commanded and encouraged to search the Scriptures (2 Tim 2:15; Acts 17:11; etc.)

Purgatory- ca. A.D. 230

Purgatory is the supposed place where the souls go of those who died in a state of grace, but were still in need of purification. The only way out of purgatory is for those who are living is to pray or pay your way out. Regarding indulgences and purgatory in the middle ages, Mattox writes:

“In this way an indulgence would remove all requirements made by the church or by God and obtain full remission. This theory applied not only to the living but extended into purgatory. According to this teaching, living persons could obtain indulgences which would shorten the stay of their relatives in purgatory... through an indulgence the pope could draw on this extra goodness stored up in the treasury of merits and apply it to any sinner that he so desired.

Purgatory is not supported by scripture, but did support the church financially for many years by requiring people to pay for their “remission of sins”. The New Testament teaches that at the point of death, there is no more opportunity to correct one’s way. At death, one’s fate is sealed and cannot be changed. That one will wait in one of the two compartments of the hadean realm in expectation of the judgment day (Luke 16:19ff; Heb. 9:27).

Pouring in the Place of Immersion- ca. A.D. 257

Pouring was used in place of immersion when the one to whom it was administered was bed-ridden. “The first known case of this was Novatian in 251. What was introduced as an exception later became the rule (Mattox 151). Novatian was sick, and this was used as a last resort due to the inability to move him to the baptismal, and upon his agreement to be scripturally baptized when he became healthy. The word translated baptism means immersion, and there is no other action which could take its place in any circumstance. To pour water on one’s head cannot truly be considered baptism.

Development of Bishops- ca. A.D. 300

Again, the Biblical definition of bishop, elder, or shepherd is one of a group of men who oversee a local congregation. Any oversight beyond the local congregation, outside of the oversight of Christ, is an unscriptural organization. Furthermore, the men Catholicism now claims are Bishops do not meet the Qualifications set forth in the New Testament (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim 3:1-13). (See “Development of Regional Elders” above)

Official Celebration of Easter- ca. A.D. 325

The celebration of Easter came from the desire to bring in those with pagan backgrounds without having to completely change their actions. Mattox states:

Rather early some Christians tried to work out a yearly calendar and place in it all of the important events in the life of Christ. This would give the Christians special festivals and celebrations as were found among the Pagan s and Jews. Where the large number of converts were Jews it was natural for them to transfer as far as possible the Jewish customs into Christian usage (mattox 121).

The Eastern and Western Church could not agree on the date or day of the week for the festival and about the second century due to a refusal to meet the new date, Victor the Bishop of Rome excommunicated the church of Asia. Mattox states:

At this time it was generally believed that all bishops were of equal authority and Victor was considered out of place by such action.... Each continued its own practice until the first general council in 325 decided in favor of the Roman Position. This was another step in exaltation of the Roman bishop (Mattox 121-122).

Many of the symbols which are seen today as part of Easter are highly pagan in their origin. What to rabbits and eggs have to do with Christ’s death and resurrection? Absolutely nothing. This is symbolic of the compromise which was prevalent in that day between the “church” and the world. The day which the New Testament teaches us to celebrate Jesus’ death and resurrection is every first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

Transubstantiation- ca. A.D. 350

The teaching of transubstantiation is the idea that the emblems of the Lord's Supper turn into the literal body and blood of Jesus. When Jesus instituted this observance (Mat. 26:26ff) there was no indication that He meant that these emblems were literally His body and blood. The Apostle Paul did not give that idea when writing to the Corinthians about their problems with the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23ff).

Development of Mass- ca. A.D. 350

The Lord commanded us to gather on the first day of the week (Sunday) to worship Him (Acts 20:6ff). The Catholic Church took the worship assembly idea, and turned it into a highly ritualistic ceremony which is a far cry from New Testament worship "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

Celebration of Christmas- ca. A.D. 360

The celebration of Christmas is very similar in its origin to the celebration of Easter (See Above). It is a mixture of Christian ideas and pagan practices. December 25th was long used to celebrate the birthday of the Roman "god" Mithrus. In an attempt to bring those who practiced the mystical religion of Mithrus, the "church" converted the day into a celebration of the birth of Jesus. The New Testament gives us neither the day of Jesus' birth, not the command to celebrate it as such.

Confession of Sin to a Priest- ca. A.D. 375

While the New Testament does teach us to confess sins, a "priest" is never the one mentioned to whom we should confess those sins. Confession of sins can be made to other Christians so that prayers can be said on their behalf (Jam. 5:16), and Christians are to confess their sins to God so that they might be forgiven (1 John 1:9). Every Christian is considered a priest under the New Testament (1 Pt. 2:9), and there is no distinction made between "clergy," or priests, and "laity," or "common" Christians.

Development of Archbishops- ca. A.D. 400

Again, the idea of one bishop, or elder, being over all over the elders in a region is foreign to the New Testament. Each congregation is overseen by its own elders (Acts 20:28), not some other group or individual.

Special Clothing for Clergy- ca. A.D. 400

The wearing of special clothing by the clergy is an attribute of Old Testament worship and not that of the New Testament. The only specific regulation for the clothing of a Christian is that it should be modest (1 Tim. 2:9).

Inherited Sin Gained Popularity- ca. A.D. 400

The Bible teaches that the one who sins has the guilt of sin. Children do not inherit the sins of their parents, neither do parents possess the guilt for the sins of their children (Ez. 18:20).

Sacred Use of Candles in Worship- ca. A.D. 425

This practice is yet another example of the Catholic Church's insistence on taking pieces of the Law of Moses and incorporating it into their worship. The only use for candles in New Testament worship was to light a room, not for a "sacred" purpose.

Veneration of Mary- ca. A.D. 475

The Catholic Church puts far more emphasis on Mary than even Jesus did. When a blessing was pronounced upon Mary, Jesus pronounced a blessing on all who hear and obey God's word (Luke 11:27-28). If Jesus wanted His mother venerated, that occasion would have been the perfect opportunity to explain it.

Veneration of Images- ca. A.D. 500

The idea that images have a special relationship to God is not a new idea. It is described in the Bible as idolatry. When Aaron and the rest of the Israelites made the golden calf, they used it as a representation of the God who brought them out of Egypt (Exodus 32). That practice was condemned by God, along with every other instance of using imagery to represent God. We should not venerate or worship images that represent God. We should worship and venerate God.

The Development of Extreme Unction- ca. A.D. 530

Extreme Unction, or the practice of last rights, is the anointing of a dying person, generally at the point of death. This action is believed to be able to bring forgiveness and the person's ability to die in God's mercy. The problem is, no one can do anything to cause another's sins to be forgiven. That ability is only available to the one who submits to the will of Christ and is covered by the blood of Christ. That event happens at baptism and continues as one walks in God's light (Rom. 6:3; Acts 22:16; 1 John 1:7-10). Catholicism uses James 5:14 as a text verse for supporting this doctrine. The difference is this, those were elders who administered the oil with the belief the receiver would live, while Catholic priests offer it expecting one to die.

Rome Declared Center of the Universal (Catholic) Church- ca. A.D. 590

The church has no earthly headquarters. The only headquarters today is heaven, where Jesus, who has all authority (Mat. 28:18), sits at the right hand of the Father (Rom. 8:34).

Boniface III Accepts the Title of Pope- ca. A.D. 606

There is no New Testament command, example, or inference for the title or position of Pope. The word Pope is latin for father. The Catholic Pope is often described using the title “Holy Father,” which is a title that should only be used for deity. Contradictory to Catholic Claims, historical records have shown, and Trice has stated:

While the bishop of Rome had been ambitious for power and authority, and for several centuries the See or Fome had been gradually increasing in influence so that ecclesiastic problems were frequently referred to it for decision, and although emperor Valentinian enacted a law in 372 empowering the bishop or Rome to judge other bishops, still no Roman bishop ever claimed the title of Universal Bishop till after the close of the sixth century, though the seeds had been sown and the ground cultivated for the germination fo the ambitious power (Trice 65-66).

According to preserved documents, Gregory the great (Bishop of Rome), and other Bishops and Christians were offended when the bishop of Constantinople (Eastern Church) assumed the title of Universal Bishop in 588, and wrote the following:

You know it, my brother; hath not the venerable council of Chalcedon conferred the honorary title of universal upon the bishops of this Apostilic see, wherof I am, by God’s will, the servant? And yet none of us hath permitted this title to be given to him; none has assumed this bold title, lest by assuming a special episcopate, we should seem to refuse it to all brethere... The Lord wishing to recall to a proper humility the yet feeble hearts of his disciples, said to them, ‘if any man desire to be first, the shame shall be last of all’; whereby we are clearly taught that he who is truly high is he who is most humble in mind. Let us, therefore, beware of being of the number of those who love the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men ‘Rabi, Rabi’. In fact, the Lord said to his disciples, ‘be ye not called Rabi, for one is your master... and all ye are brethren. Neigheer be ye called Fathers, for ye have but one Father’.

What then could you answer, beloved brother, in terrible judgment to come, who desire not only to be called Father, but Universal Father of the world. Beware then of evil suggestions; fly from the council of offense. ‘It is impossible’ indeed, ‘but that offenses will come; but for all that woe unto him through whom they come!’ In consequence of

your wicked and vainglorious title, the church is divided and the hearts of the brethren are offended (H.R. 50 et seq) (Trice 66-67).

Although the claim is made by the Catholics that Peter was the first Pope and succession was passed through him, historical evidence and Scripture clearly state otherwise. Boniface III was the first to officially wear the name “Pope” in 606A.D when he was appointed by Emperor Phocas.

Original Introduction of the Organ in Worship- ca. A.D. 670

The fact that mechanical instruments were not used in the church for over 600 years helps to show us that they were not something designated by God. There is no command, example, or implication which gives Christians to use mechanical instruments in Christian worship.

Canonization of “Saints”- ca. A.D. 900

Every New Testament Christian is a saint (Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). There is no special designation for those who are more blessed or more highly thought of.

Development of Lent- ca. A.D. 1000

Lent is described as a forty day period of abstinence, self-reflection, and prayer. Christians should maintain this type of selfless attitude at all times. That is what Jesus meant when He taught that one should deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him (Mat. 16:24).

Institution of Penance- ca. A.D. 1025

Penance is the idea that one must pay the penalty for sins, whether public or private, even if they have been confessed and repented of. This includes saying a certain number of “Hail Mary’s” or “Our Father’s.” This idea of penance would later come to include indulgences, which were amounts of money that were to be paid for particular sins. Repentance does not automatically take away the penalty of sin, but God requires no more than that of His children (Acts 8:22).

Prohibition of the Clergy to Marry- ca. A.D. 1080

Prohibiting clergy to marry has long been seen as a sign of devotion toward God, yet God says that it is not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). Forbidding one to marry is described as a doctrine of devils (1 Tim. 4:3). *It is not good that the man should be alone (Gen 2:18), and when one is forced into this position, it does not allow that person an authorized outlet for the desire to procreate. Man and woman were given physical desires which can only be met through the act of marriage, which the Catholic church has taken upon themselves to forbid.*

Sprinkling Replaces Immersion- ca. A.D. 1310

By the very nature of the word translated baptize, sprinkling nor pouring could be under consideration. The word translated baptize both implies and demands complete and total submersion in water as indicated by Paul in Rom 6:3-4 and by the example of the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Tradition Declared Equal to Biblical Teaching- ca. A.D. 1545

Declaring tradition on equal standing as scripture is a very convenient idea that allows Catholics to make up the rules as they go. However, the Bible is the only standard for godly living (2 Pet. 1:3). Nothing else can be used to regulate what we must do to be right and stay right with God.

Mass Was to Be Given in Latin- ca. A.D. 1545

Latin has long been used as the language for mass. Using Latin goes well with the general idea of keeping the “laity” ignorant, because the Catholic Church has longed understood that an ignorant majority is more easily controlled. The Word of God gives freedom, not ignorance (John 8:32).

Apocryphal Books added to the Bible- ca. A.D. 1545

The apocryphal books are uninspired books which were added by the Catholic Church to perpetuate many of their dogmas and ideas (See study on Canon in this series). If a writing is uninspired by God, it should not be used as a standard for the way one is to live (Gal. 1:6-10; Prov. 30:6).

The Teaching of the Immaculate Conception of Mary- ca. A.D. 1845

The idea of the immaculate conception has nothing to do with Jesus’ birth. It is the idea that Mary was made in such a way that it was impossible for her to sin. This also allowed her to be born without “original sin.” By teaching this, the Catholics try to explain away how Jesus would have escaped “original sin,” because if Mary was guilty of “original sin,” then Jesus would have been guilty of it as well. The truth is, Mary did commit sin (1 John 1:8-10; Rom. 3:23), and she was in need of a Savior like everyone else.

Infallibility of the Pope- ca. A.D. 1870

The idea that the Pope’s action, as he acts as Pope, are infallible is very interesting. The Catholics consider Peter the first Pope, a designation which they say was bestowed upon him at the ascension of Jesus and declared before Jesus’ death (Mat. 16:18-20). Yet, we have a record of Peter sinning after Jesus’ ascension (Gal. 2:11).

The Catholic church describes this infallibility in the Catholic Encyclopedia as shown below:

Literally "from the chair", a theological term which signifies authoritative teaching and is more particularly applied to the definitions given by the Roman pontiff. Originally the name of the seat occupied by a professor or a bishop, cathedra was used later on to denote the magisterium, or teaching authority. The phrase ex cathedra occurs in the writings of the medieval theologians, and more frequently in the discussions which arose after the Reformation in regard to the papal prerogatives. But its present meaning was formally determined by the Vatican Council, Sess. IV, Const. de Ecclesiâ Christi, c. iv: "We teach and define that it is a dogma Divinely revealed that the Roman pontiff when he speaks ex cathedra, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the Divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable (Pace 677).

Conclusion

As one studies the above error, it is clearly seen how far away from scripture the Catholic Church has gone. Among some of their beliefs are clear contradictions with what scripture teaches. The continued path of apostasy proves that the Catholic Church was not built on the proper foundation, the Word of God.

Review Questions:

Question 1) Discuss the details of Catholicism's Special Fast Days in light of 1 Timothy 4:1-5; and Colossians 2:16-23.

Question 2) Are regional elders authorized in the Bible? Does Titus 1:5 command that elders be appointed "over" every city or "in" every city? How does Acts 14:23 relate to Catholicism's attempt to appoint elders over multiple churches?

Question 3) Are infants born in sin according to the Ezekiel 18:20 and Matthew 19:14? Did the first century church baptize infants considering Acts 8:12? What is a condition of baptism according to Mark 16:16 and Acts 8:36-38?

Question 4) Who are priests according to 1 Peter 1:1; 2:5, 9 and how does this relate to Catholicism's separation between clergy and laity?

Question 5) Does the Bible teach of a place called purgatory? How does Hebrews 9:27; Luke 16:19-31; and Ecclesiastes 9:10 relate to this idea of purgatory?

Question 6) Discuss the Bible's commandment for salvation in light of the Greek word for baptism and Acts 8:34-39.

Question 7) Who does God tell us our Mediator is to access the Father (cf. John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5)? Who are we to confess our sins to according to 1 John 1:5-9?

Question 8) Where is the headquarters of the church considering Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11; and Ephesians 1:22-23?

Question 9) Discuss the introduction of the organ in worship (cf. Ephesians 5:19).



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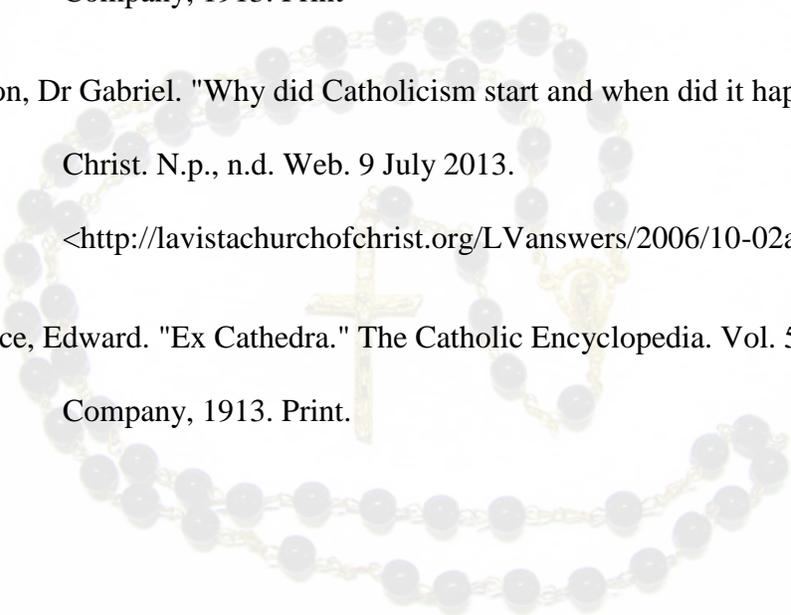
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