

Why I Became A Protestant

by

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CHAPTER ONE

PONTIFICAL INFALLIBILITY

The Catholic Church deduces the Catholic dogma of the infallibility of the Roman pontiff from the fact of the grant of the keys of the kingdom of Heaven which Jesus Christ made to Saint Peter.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:18, 19).

This is what Jesus Christ actually says. What does the Roman Church say?

“I will give unto thee the keys and to *thy successors* . . .”

“Upon this rock which art thou and *thy successors* . . .”

“Whatsoever thou and *thy successors* bind shall be bound, and whatsoever thou and *thy successors* shall loose shall be loosed.”

The Catholic Church knows that Jesus Christ did not say “*thy successors*,” but it asserts as a matter of faith that He meant it.

And of course if the *successors* of Saint Peter, that is the Bishops of Rome, have the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, it is evident that the only means of entering Heaven is to do what the Roman Catholic Church orders. For this reason it affirms decidedly: “Outside the Church there is no salvation.”

Let us carefully analyze this Gospel fact.

If when Peter and *his successors* close the door to anyone, Jesus Christ opens it; and if when Peter and *his successors* open, Jesus Christ closes, to have given him the keys would not make sense. It would have been a mere play on words.

To have received the keys on this condition would have been of no value to Peter and *his successors*.

If Peter and *his successors* have received from Jesus Christ the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, when they open, it must be opened; and when they close, it must be closed.

Is it really so?

The Catholic Church says so. But we say that if it is so, we must accept, as a logical consequence, that Jesus Christ has given up forever and in all cases judging men.

Peter and *his successors* are the absolute judges and the masters of Heaven and earth so far as the salvation of men is concerned.

Whoever Peter and his successors allow will enter, and whoever Peter and *his successors* exclude will stay out.

If this is so, we may ask: Why does Jesus Christ say through Matthew:

“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat . . .” (25:32-35).

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat . . .” (25:41, 42).

And in the previous chapter He says: **“Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods”** (24:46, 47).

And speaking of the unfaithful servant he says: **“And (He) shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”** (24:51).

And in Luke: **“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are”** (13:24-30).

In the parable of the tares Jesus Christ explains clearly that the servants, on knowing that an enemy sowed tares in the field say to Him: **“Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?”** He says to them,

“Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:24-30).

The disciples asked for an explanation of this parable and the Lord made the meaning clear to them:

“He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; . . . The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire” (13:37, 38, 41, 42).

Note that in no place does Jesus say that He will accept those whom the Apostles may have pardoned or judged as good. Always it is He who appears judging directly, employing or making use of His angels. But the Judge who will give the sentence and will separate the good from the evil is Christ Jesus alone.

Do we not say in the creed: **“From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead?”**

Let us ask or argue then: Can it be that on the day of judgment Jesus Christ will take away the keys from Peter and *his successors* to open now if afterward Jesus Christ is to close, and *vice versa*?

The keys would be of no use.

Or, can it be that on the Day of Judgment Jesus Christ will come only to ratify solemnly what Peter and *his successors* have done?

In this case Jesus Christ does not tell the truth when He says that He will come again to judge, nor when He declares in the Revelation:

“These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth” (Revelation 3:7).

The Catholic cannot solve this dilemma, and no Catholic apologist ever connects or relates the granting of the keys to Peter with the final judgment for fear of the evident consequences.

We have repeated many times “Peter and *his successors*,” for this is what the Roman Catholic Church says. But we must call attention to the fact that Jesus Christ and His Apostles *never once* said it.

This only makes one who judges calmly, and sincerely seeks the truth think of the possibility of a sophistry.

Jesus Christ says explicitly: **“To thee I give the keys. So that what *thou* openest may be opened, and what *thou* closest may be closed.”**

Not a single time did He say: “To thee and *thy successors*.”

Not a single time did He say: “Whatsoever thou and *thy successors* open shall be opened.”

Not a single time.

Neither did He hand them over to the Church.

Not a single time did He say: **“Upon this rock I will build my church, and I will give unto her the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”**

Neither did He hand them over to the Apostolic College.

He gave them only to Peter: **“To thee.”**

Of what did these keys consist which only one man could have and use?

They didn't refer to the power of binding and loosing, for this same power was given (in Matthew 18:18) to all the Apostles:

“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Moreover; **“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”** (Matthew 18:19, 20).

One should not confuse, then, the privilege of the keys, which is given *to one*, with that of binding and loosing, which is given to *many*.

There is only one thing which Peter did in an exclusive way, and that no one else has been able to do. It was to inaugurate the era of the Church, opening the door of the Kingdom of Heaven, first to the Jews and Jewish proselytes on the Day of Pentecost:

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39), afterward to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius:

“Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

“And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word” (Acts 10:40-44).

Evidently Jesus Christ wanted to give the keys to Saint Peter as one gives to the minister of the affairs of state, or to the governor the keys of a state building which is going to be officially opened.

The Apostle Saint Peter himself refers with satisfaction and legitimate pride to this unique privilege granted by his Lord, in the Council of Jerusalem:

“And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe” (Acts 15:7).

Observe that Saint Peter does not say: “Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice that I should be the infallible head of the Church and, therefore, I declare and define *ex cathedra* the matter which is being discussed or debated in this Council.” But he did say: **“God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.”**

That is the way Saint Peter himself interpreted the privilege of the keys. Can we understand it in any other way?

“*Unto thee, Peter,*” says Christ, “I will give the keys.” For it is a unique case, the declaration and this privilege.

Not “*to thee and to the other Apostles,*” since only one is needed to inaugurate. But “*thou,*” according to this text, and “*they,*” according to chapter 18, can bind and loose, moving the powers of Heaven through prayer.

Not to *thee and to thy successors,* for the idea of an apostolic successor is totally unknown in the New Testament.

The Apostles were an exclusive group of witnesses of Christ, to the point that the apostleship of Paul was questioned because he had not walked with Christ in the days of His flesh; although he defends himself declaring that he saw the Lord in His glory and this gives him the right to call himself an apostle:

“It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

“And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me” (II Corinthians 12:1-6)

“Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Mine answer to them that do examine me is this” (I Corinthians 9:1-3).

Which of the Popes has had either of these two privileges?

With what reason, then, can the Bishops of Rome claim apostolic rights?

Where is the statement of Christ or of Saint Peter that such rights could be conferred on another person outside of the group of the Twelve?

Jesus Christ speaks with exactness and knows how to express what He means.

Jesus Christ distinguishes clearly between “*thou*,” “*ye*,” and “*she*.”

Thou, Peter, shalt be the foundation stone or, speaking apart from metaphors, the founding architect of My Church. He who laid the first stone of the building with the declaration of My deity and I will open it up (inaugurate it). To thee I will give the keys, conferring on thee this special honor.

Ye, the Apostles, leaning on Peter, next to him, shall build My Church. Whatsoever ye do in this building, inspired by the Holy Spirit, who will lead you into all truth:

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13), I will consider it “well done.”

Ye, the Twelve, jointly and supported on Peter, whose declaration of faith in My deity is the basis, the foundation stone of My church.

Cyril, in his book IV on the Trinity, says, “I believe that by the rock you ought to understand the unchanging faith of the Apostles.”

Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, in his second book on the Trinity, says: “The rock (stone) is the blessed and only rock of the faith confessed by the mouth of Peter.”

John Chrysostom, in his 55th Homily on the Gospel of Matthew, says:

“**on this rock I will build my church.**’ That is to say, on the faith of your confession. And what was the confession of the Apostle? Here it is: **‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’**”

She, the Church, will have an assistance, a supernatural strength, against which the infernal powers will be dashed to pieces.

To thee, Peter, the keys to open, to inaugurate, the age of grace.

To her, the Church, the strength to resist to the end of the age (consummation of the ages).

So we see clearly that Jesus Christ knows how to make the proper distinction and give to each one what He desires without any confusion.

But the fact is that, in spite of the evidence of what has been said, there is a text on which the Catholics take their stand as a conclusive proof of their opinion concerning their dogmatic statement.

Jesus Christ said: **“I will be with you to the end of the age”**

And it is evident that neither Jesus Christ nor the Apostles were thinking that they would live until the end of the world.

Then, concludes the Catholic Church: Jesus Christ was referring to the ***successors of Peter and of the Apostles***. Otherwise this statement had no meaning.

To this we reply that it is true that Jesus Christ made this promise to the Apostles and that of course Jesus Christ did not believe in such a prolonged temporal life of the Apostles.

What Jesus Christ promised them He has fulfilled, and will fulfill, just as He said, to or until the end of the age.

And what is it that He would fulfill?

What He promised: ***To be with them until the end of the age.***

In Gospel language: **“The end of the age” . . . FOREVER.**

With this statement Jesus Christ assures them of their eternal salvation. He and they will never again be separated. They have their eternal salvation assured to them by virtue of their genuine faith in Him, as He stated: **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life”** (John 5:24).

That is why He assures them that He will be with *them* while they are in this world and forever *after*.

“I go to prepare for you,” He says to them, **“a mansion, that where I am, there ye may be also”** (John 14:2).

Jesus Christ foresaw the discussion which this matter would bring about, and He wanted to insist and speak with exceptional precision and clarity, since on it would depend finding the truth or erring forever.

Note that Jesus Christ insists, as in the case of the keys and Peter: **“with you”**; not with *“your successors.”*

Not “with My church” as an organization or hierarchical society, but with you.

This “you” admits of only two interpretations:

One literal: the apostolic group, as we have just mentioned.

Another general thinking of the Apostles as representatives of the whole Church.

But this general interpretation includes all believers, great and small, of all times: it makes no reference to any hierarchy.

It is true that Christ will also be with us who seek Him, love Him, and believe in Him and in His Gospel, until the end of the age.

He confirms it in another passage when He says:

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

He will never leave us. But it is evident that this does not give us infallibility.

And it is true that the gates of Hell will not be able to destroy her, the Church. While there are men, there will be those who love Him and keep His commandments, and there the Church founded by Him will be.

This is all true, and it is very comforting; but it does not give proof of infallibility for anyone.

The Catholics say that if the Church could fall into doctrinal errors it would have been overcome by the powers of Hell. The devil, who is the father of error and lying would have triumphed over it.

For the Church to err in doctrine is to err in the main thing. The promise of Jesus, then, would not be fulfilled.

In order that the divine promise can be fulfilled:

“And the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it,” it is necessary that there can never be any error in its doctrinal statements.

To this we reply, that when Jesus Christ said that the forces of Hell would not prevail against it, He referred to the *preservation* or continuation of the Church. He never meant to say that there would not be sins of all kinds in His Church.

Among the twelve Apostles, chosen by Him, one was a traitor, and the others committed a heap of faults and fell into countless errors. Jesus Christ had to correct them continually. And after the Lord’s ascension the Apostles had to struggle always against the doctrinal errors and the deviations which sprang up among His disciples.

No; Jesus Christ did not give any privilege of infallibility, or at least there is no evidence that He gave it, to anyone, outside of the Apostles, when these latter should speak and write as inspired by the Holy Spirit; that is, in doctrinal matters.

And note well that the infallibility of the Apostles is sufficient so that the one who wants to find the truth can surely obtain it.

Knowing that the truth is in Christ and in what the Apostles said and did after the coming of the Holy Spirit, it is no longer necessary to give infallibility to anyone else. For him who wants to know the Truth, it is enough to point him to the Holy Scriptures and tell him: ***“Here it is; read and practice what is taught you here. The one who does this will live. The one who turns aside from this will not have blessed life everlasting.”***

And it is evident that to say this it is not necessary to be infallible.

As there always will be those who say this and practice this, Jesus Christ could truly say, that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. That is, that they will never destroy His Church.

Apropos of this I wish to relate a strictly historical anecdote.

A group of evangelical young people returning from a Baptist young people’s conference were traveling on a train, conversing cheerfully. They wore the insignia of the Baptist Young People’s Union to which they belonged. A Jesuit father came up to them and, suspecting what they were, said to them:

“What insignia is that which you are wearing?”

“That of the Baptist Young People’s Union.”

“So? Protestants? Well, who has been fooling you?”

And after a few brief sentences, the ironical Jesuit meant to fire the final shot against the faith of those young people.

“Let’s see. Who tells you what you are to believe?”

“The Bible,” they answered.

“Wonderful! But you know the Bible is made up of various books selected from among many. Some they have called holy and inspired of God, and others apocryphal, or simply human history. Tell me: who has selected these holy books and who guarantees that the ones you ought to believe are these and not the others? If there is no infallible authority, your belief in the Bible alone has no foundation.”

For a moment they all remained silent as if surprised by the argument.

“But one of them courteously addressed the Jesuit and asked him: “Do you know how many parts the *Divine Comedy* of Dante has?”

“Three,” said the Jesuit, “Hell, purgatory and Heaven.”

“And do you know who wrote the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*?”

“Of course! Homer.”

“Are you sure.”

“Very sure.”

“If I told you that the *Divine Comedy* of Dante has a fourth part describing Limbo, and that the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* are by Virgil, what would you say to me?”

“That you are an ignoramus.”

“And you would be right. But now I ask you: to have that certainty, did you need to consult a panel of infallible critics and historians?”

“No.”

“Of course not. Neither you nor anyone else. The man who, in order to admit that the *Divine Comedy* has three parts and not four, and in order to believe that the *Odyssey* is by Homer and the *Aeneid* by Virgil, demands a literary academy with the gift of infallibility, we would consider ignorant and foolish. We know, or can know with certainty, if we wish, what Homer said, what Horace said, and what Virgil said. And not only what he said but how he said it. And we distinguish the editions with omissions, interpolations or corruptions of his style without the need of an infallible body of authorities. This demand is absurd which the Catholics make for an infallible authority so they can interpret according to their own notions what the men said who really were infallible. It is enough for us to know what they said in order to be sure of our faith.

“And I’ll add this besides: What authority can there be in this world to keep anyone from reading Matthew, John, Peter and Paul? And the Church prohibits it. It permits their reading only on condition that the text of the sacred writer be clarified by some Catholic theologian.”

“And that is according to common sense,” said the Jesuit, “because not everybody is able to understand what the Bible says.”

“Of course; just as not everybody is able to understand Dante, and although we are aware of the convenience of commentaries, it has never occurred to anyone to stop the direct reading of the original text.

“If Father Bover, Father Pons, or Nacar-Colung, puts some annotation in the margin of the sacred text, then we can read Luke and John.

“If there is no Catholic to attach notes to it, what John wrote has to be put in the Index of Prohibited Books. And what Matthew wrote, put in the Index of Prohibited Books. And what Paul wrote, in the Index of Prohibited Books! And - the height of absurdity - what ‘the first Pope, the foundation stone of the Church, placed by Jesus Christ Himself,’ says, condemned among the prohibited books if there is not some Catholic theologian to annotate it! So that one who is not infallible makes lawful and orthodox the text of those who had received the gift of doctrinal infallibility.”

There is another truth in the Gospel which has an intimate relation with what we have just said.

Jesus Christ promised the Apostles that, on the day of judgment, *they*, that is Peter and the other Apostles, will sit on twelve thrones, and will judge with Him the twelve tribes of Israel, forming a part of the tribunal.

Note here again that Jesus Christ limited this great privilege to His twelve Apostles. Not one more. He does not speak of thrones for the successors of Peter through the centuries. All the others, that is those who are not *the Twelve*: Popes, cardinals, bishops, priests and laymen will be below, or before the twelve presided over by Jesus Christ, to be judged. Not the Apostles. They will be with the Supreme Judge, Jesus Christ our Lord.

So then, a clear consequence: Peter and the other Apostles are separated from the Popes and bishops who followed them.

This proves once more that the privileges which Christ granted to His Apostles were *person*, nontransferable; granted for having been His companions, members of the Apostolic College and founders of the Church of Jesus Christ, together with Him.

Let us conclude this chapter, so clear for us who take the teachings of the Gospel just as they are, and so obscure for the Roman Catholics who close their eyes to the truth, with the following dilemma:

In order to prove pontifical infallibility, one must prove that:

1. Jesus Christ gave the keys to the Church; that is to Peter and *his successors*.
2. Or, that Peter, who was the only one who could do and undo, passed on *all* his privileges to his successors, that is, to the bishops of Rome.

As neither the first nor the second is proved, no one in this world can appropriate for himself the gift of infallibility.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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