

## THE CASE AGAINST COMPLETE APOSTASY IN CHRISTIANITY

Some Christian groups believe that most Churches, particularly the Catholic Church, are apostates. They think the other bodies have left the Christian faith and thus are pseudo-Christian.

Catholicism says the Church meaning its popes are kept from going into that much error. For Protestants, if a Church goes wrong God will set it up again somewhere else.

Let us look at the verses in the Bible that are supposed to justify the Christian boast that the true faith will always be preserved by God on the earth.

Matthew 16:18, Jesus says that he will build his Church and the jaws of death will never triumph over it. The word Church means assembly - that is all. So you can believe that there was always an assembly in the name of Christ though it was spiritually dead. Assembly only means grouping. Roman Catholicism has exaggerated it to mean family of God united in love and under one spiritual father the Pope.

Jaws of death or gates of Hell (Hell here means death - Jesus sometimes uses Hell to refer to death) could be referring to Jesus' promise of resurrection. So if believers are taken from the earth they will rise again. In that case it is not a promise that the true Christian faith will always be on the earth.

Matthew 28:20, Jesus tells the apostles that he will be with them until the end of the world. But it can be translated as end of the age. End of the age does not mean end of the world but the end of the Christian age. And Jesus can be with the world and guide it without there being a true Church. Rome says that Protestants are in a false Church but Jesus is still with them. Jesus may be in the world trying to guide the world but there is no hint that anybody will listen. The verse implies that if apostasy happens, it happens because people resist the inspirations of God that seek to spur them on to receive God's truth.

Philippians 1:6 has Paul the apostle declaring that he is sure that Jesus who has begun good works in his people will perfect them until he comes in the Day of the Lord. This verse does not eliminate the view that people will stop letting Jesus perfect them. It only promises that the perfecting power is there for those who will co-operate and will be there forever until the coming of Christ.

John 14:16,17,26. Jesus tells the apostles that they will be led into all truth and be reminded of all Jesus' teaching. The Church says that because the apostles didn't develop all Jesus' teaching that the Church had to come after them and complete the job that this is promising that the Church will grow in truth not error. But we know so little about the apostles. Perhaps they knew loftier things that they didn't teach for the world wasn't ready. And perhaps the promise was for them alone that on earth and in Heaven they would see the truth in full. It may have nothing to do with the broader Church. It would say if it did. The Catholic Church does not have all truth for there are many things that theologians are at loggerheads over. How could the Catholic Church remember everything that Jesus said as the last verse promises? The Church says that Jesus' promise must be fulfilled in her tradition for the gospels say they only report some of Jesus' teaching and statements which is not true. The fact that no tradition is reliable or can be traced back to Jesus proves that he didn't promise that if he was God.

Jesus is saying that the scriptures have all the truth you need. He could have been promising the apostles the power to write scripture or to give divinely inspired teachings which will become scripture. This is the sensible interpretation for the New Testament is the closest we can get to the apostles and anything else is too far off to be trusted.

He is not telling the Catholic Church that he will help her remember what he did for she was not around to see what he did.

If Jesus meant that the apostles and their successors would enjoy protection against error then he would have mentioned those who would succeed them. Infallibility would have to be superior to the Bible and to tradition for it interprets and judges them. It is unthinkable that Jesus would have passed over such an important charism – unless the Church is lying and there is no such charism.

Jesus never said that the councils of the Church were beyond error. If he had he would have laid down conditions for this infallibility to take effect.

The idea that Jesus is promising infallibility in the production of new scripture is the most likely meaning for Jesus never said that there would be a Church that could not err but it stands to reason that additions to the Jewish Bible were required.

When Jesus promised to use the spirit of God to make the apostles remember he must have been a fraud for that should not be necessary – there was pen and paper in those days - and so he was promising an unreasonable miracle. If God does daft miracles who knows what he is up to? The Church could not have picked a worse text to make her excuse for claiming to be inerrant.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” John 15:16. This verse only proves that Jesus wanted the legacy of the apostles to be permanent - it does not say that it would be. And what concerns Jesus in the verse is the apostles being holy enough to get their prayers answered. It is not about doctrinal accuracy.

At the end of Matthew’s gospel when Jesus told the apostles to teach all nations he meant through producing scripture for word of mouth is unsafer. That was how they could literally teach all nations. By implication, the Church had to distribute their new Bible for they could not be everywhere. Yet some Catholics saw evidence of the infallibility doctrine in that episode! If they were right then only the apostles had the kind of infallibility that the Roman cult boasts that it has.

Jude 3 says that the faith is delivered once and for all to the saints but there is no reason to believe that he was thinking of future Christians as well. He means the apostles delivered it once and for all which remains true if the Church left the faith after it got rid of the apostles. He instructed the Christians to contend for this faith showing that its future depended on them. Jude 3 is always taken by Christians as proof that the faith would never disappear completely. God could intend to deliver the faith once and for all and it could be lost and then found again. If Jude 3 were thinking of the future it would only mean that the means of restoring the faith would always exist.

1 Timothy 3:15. The Church is called the pillar and ground of the truth. Surely, Rome knows that the Church can be this without being infallible say when it teaches an infallible book or something. Also the definite articles are missing. So Paul did not write about THE Church being THE pillar of the truth but Church being pillar of truth. He means the Church in the region he was writing to not the general and entire Church. In Corinth it was not much of a pillar of truth with heretics and liberals running it. It could be too that the Church was only infallible in producing the Bible so that the Bible could be the infallible authority and when it teaches the Bible it is pillar of truth. The Catholic Church is not using its infallibility now for it is not having an ecumenical council or an ex-cathedra papal statement made which makes us see the point clearly for it is using the past infallible statements so it could use an infallible Bible instead of these statements if that was the way God decreed.

The Church knows fine well that her interpretation of the texts is unwarranted for it is only necessary to skim over them to see that this is so.

Her apologists reply that by themselves they don’t look like much but when one considers them in the light of the fact that an infallible interpreter is needed they must mean the Church. But this is the fallacy that since Jesus needed one he commanded one. Perhaps he did not know he needed one.

We conclude that the doctrine that the faith will always be preserved is not very helpful. For Catholics, it means little more than saying the handful that run the Vatican will be kept in the faith. For Protestants, there is no assurance that their religion will always be true to Jesus.

The doctrine may as well not be in the Bible. And it is not in it!

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