

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognise them..." Matthew 7:15-16

CORRUPTION

STEPHEN VII (896-897AD)

"He dug up a Corsican predecessor, Pope Formosus (891-896), when he had been dead for over nine months.... He dressed the stinking corpse in full pontificals, placed him on the throne in the Lateran and proceeded to interrogate him personally....After being found guilty, the corpse was condemned as an anti-pope, stripped and minus the two fingers with which he had given his fake apostolic blessing, was thrown into the Tiber...." (Vicars of Christ - the Dark Side of the Papacy by Father Peter de Rosa).

SERGIUS III (904-911)

Standing in his way to the throne had been Leo V, who reigned for one month before he was imprisoned by an usurper, Cardinal Christopher. Sergius had both killed. Then he exhumed his predecessor and had him beheaded, three fingers chopped off and thrown into the Tiber.

JOHN XII (955 - 963)

He invented sins, it was said, that had not been known since the beginning of the world - including sleeping with his mother. John XII ran a harem in the Lateran Palace, he gambled with the offerings of pilgrims and he even toasted the devil at the high altar during the mass.

BENEDICT V (964)

Described by a church historian as "the most iniquitous of all the monsters of ungodliness."

BENEDICT IX (1032-44, 1045, 1047-8)

Elected pope at age eleven, he was twice driven from his position due to his participation in

plunder, immorality, oppression and murder. Church historians described him as "That wretch, from the beginning of his pontificate to the end of his life, feasted on immorality," and "a demon from hell in the disguise of a priest has occupied the chair of Peter."

SIXTUS IV (1471 - 1484)

This is the pope who built the Sistine Chapel in which all popes are now elected. Sixtus IV had several illegitimate sons, licensed the brothels of Rome and received a large amount of revenue for the papacy from these houses of iniquity, introduced the novel idea of selling indulgences for the dead to raise more revenue, and sanctioned the Inquisition in Castile (Spain) by issuing a bull in 1478 (in just one year - 1482 - in one city of Andalusia, 2000 "heretics" were burned as a result).

ALEXANDER VI (1492 - 1503)

He was a murderer by age 12, he had 10 known illegitimate children, he was infamous for his drunken and immoral parties, he was known to have cardinals who had purchased their positions to be poisoned so that he could sell their positions again and increase his turnover. He spent a fortune in bribes to secure his own election as pope and he caused the Reformer Savonarola to be burned at the stake.

CRUELTY

The Roman papacy has been characterised by extreme cruelty in its persecution of those it deemed as heretics. In particular the Waldensians, Lollards and Albigensians were slaughtered by the forces of Rome.

In 1208 Pope Innocent III declared: "Death to the heretics!" Great privileges and rewards were promised to those who would annihilate the "heretics" and to every man who killed one of them, the assurance was given that he would attain the highest place in Heaven!

The first target of this crusade against the Albigensians was the town of Begiers. All its inhabitants were killed and all the buildings burned. The monk leading this slaughter, Arnold, reported back to Innocent III "Today, Your Holiness, twenty thousand citizens were put to the sword, regardless of age or sex."

In Bram the papal soldiers cut off the noses and gouged out the eyes of the Albigensian "heretics".

In Minerve, 140 Albigensians were burned alive.

In Lavaure 400 "heretics" were burned at the stake.

In response, Innocent III praised the papal soldiers who had destroyed the heretics.

The successor of Innocent III, Pope Gregory IX established the Inquisition in 1232. For over 600 years, spanning the reigns of over 80 popes, the Inquisition tortured and killed tens of thousands of Protestants including the Waldensians, Hussites, Lollards and Huguenots.

CONTRADICTION

Pope Gregory VII (1073-85) declared that "The Pope cannot make a mistake".

The First Vatican Council (1869-70) under Pope Pius IX raised the Dogma of Papal infallibility to become the official teaching of Roman Catholicism adding the usual anathema upon all who dared to disagree:

"But if anyonepresume to contradict this assertion, let him be accused."

Yet between 1378 to 1408 there were first two popes and then three! Gregory XII reigned from Rome, Benedict XIII from Avignon and John XXIII from Pisa.

John XXIII was described in *Vicars of Christ*: "He was noted as a former pirate, pope-poisoner, mass-murderer, mass-fornicator..., adulterer on a scale unknown outside fables, simoniac par excellence, blackmailer, pimp, master of dirty tricks."

Yet John XXIII accused his rival pope Benedict XIII of being "a Fake" and Gregory XII he nicknamed "Mistake"!

Pope Pius IX, who at the First Vatican Council (1869 - 1870) caused the dogma of Papal Infallibility to become the official teaching of Roman Catholicism, also issued an edict permitting "excommunication, confiscation, banishment, imprisonment for life, as well as secret execution in heinous cases."

At the First Vatican Council, Bishop Strossmayer (himself a papist) gave a speech arguing against papal infallibility. He pointed out: "Gregory I calls anyone anti-Christ who takes the name of Universal Bishop; and contrawise Boniface III made Emperor Phocas confer that title upon him. Paschal II and Eugenius III authorised duelling; Julius II and Pins IV forbad it. Hadrian II declared civil magistrates to be valid; Pius VII condemned them. Sixtus V published an edition of the Bible and recommended it to be read; Pius VII condemned the reading of the Bible."

It could also be noted that while one (supposedly infallible) pope, Eugene IV (1431 - 1447), condemned Joan of Arc as a heretic to be burned alive, another pope, Benedict XV, in 1920, declared her to be a saint and her burning a mistake.

Yet the Dogma of Papal Infallibility declares that when a pope speaks *ex cathedra* his words are "as infallible as if it had been uttered by Christ Himself!"

In plain contradiction to this "papal infallibility" is the Bible. The apostle Peter (from whom all popes claim their succession) never suggested that he was infallible. Indeed in his first general epistle Peter described himself simply as "an elder" and he exhorted his "fellow elders" not to act as "lords over those entrusted to you" (1 Peter 5:1-3).

Paul records in Galatians 2:11 "But when Peter had come to Antioch I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed..." Plainly Paul did not see Peter as infallible. Also Peter was married (Mark 1:30; 1 Corinthians 9:5). Indeed a requirement of a church leader is that he is married and bring up his children in the faith (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

The Lord Jesus taught: "You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve..." Matthew 20:25-28

Jesus taught that no one is good - except God alone (Mark 10:18) and we are to call no-one on earth Father - God alone is our spiritual Father. How then can any pope be called "his Holiness" or "Holy Father"! The term Holy Father is only used once in the Bible and it is clearly addressed to God the Father in Christ's prayer (John 17:11).

It is no wonder that when Archbishop Thomas Cranmer was about to be burned at the stake, on 21 March 1556, he declared: "As for the pope, I refuse him as Christ's enemy, and Anti-Christ, with all his false doctrines."

In the words of Martin Luther: "Unless I am convinced by Scripture or clear reasoning that I am in error - for popes and councils have often erred and contradicted themselves - I cannot recant for I am subject to the Scriptures I have quoted. My conscience is captive to the Word of God. It is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against one's conscience. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. So help me God. Amen."

Sources: Vicars of Christ - the Dark Side of the Papacy by Father Peter de Rosa, Corgi Books, London, 1989

Roman Catholicism by Loraine Boetner, Banner of Truth, London, 1966

The Pope by Ian Brown, Londonderry, 1991

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Frontline Fellowship
P O Box 74, Newlands, 7725, Cape Town, South Africa
Tel.: +27 21 689-4480 Fax: +27 21 685-5884
E-Mail: admin@frontline.org.za