

Roman Catholic vs. Protestant: Key Arguments

What are the key arguments used by the Roman Catholic Church against Protestants?

1. Apostolic Succession

- a. The apostolic college: Matthew 10:1-8; Luke 6:13, etc.
- b. Binding and loosing authority: Matthew 16:18-19; 18:18; John 20:21-22.
- c. Titus 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:2 **BUT...**
- d. Ephesians 2:20; Matthew 18:17-20
- e. Leadership is a plurality: Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1; 1 Peter 5:1, etc.
- f. *Unbroken* succession is extremely dubious.

2. Only the Roman Catholic Church has the Pope and Magisterium, the “pillar and foundation of truth.”

- a. All genuine truths stated by Rome can be found in the Scriptures.
- b. The papacy and Rome have issued demonstrably corrupt and wicked bulls and encyclicals.
 - Pope Honorus was condemned as a heretic in 680 A.D.
 - Pope Liberius (352-366) signed an “heretical” document under duress.
 - Many popes have been accused of heresy or contradiction with the RC’s teaching.
- c. The “ex cathedra” qualification is a practical myth, and there have been very few ex cathedra statements:
 - The Immaculate Conception of Mary (Pius IX 1854)
 - The Assumption of Mary (Pius XII 1950)
- d. The teachings from the “Extraordinary Magisterium” (Councils) is enormous.

[The teachings of the Magisterium are just as subject to “interpretation” as is Scripture, negating the RC argument that “interpretation” belongs to the Magisterium—who interprets the interpreter?.]

- e. The differences between “ex cathedra,” “Extraordinary Magisterium,” and “Ordinary Magisterium” are categories that only appear after Vatican I (1870) and are designed to defend the integrity of the Church.

[“Yes, the Church has taught and done wild and wicked things, but these weren’t from the Magisterium, so that doesn’t count.”]

3. Protestantism is unbiblical (two key examples):

- a. *Sola Scriptura* is a novel and unbiblical teaching – key texts:
 - i. 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15 (cf. Matt. 15:3, etc.); 1 Corinthians 5:9; Col. 4:16.
 - ii. 2 Peter 3:16; Acts 8:31.
 - iii. Scripture itself does not give us the canon (see note below). **BUT...**
 - iv. *Sola scriptura* not *solo scriptura*: It is not “Scripture only.” It is “Scripture finally.”¹
 - v. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:2-4
 - vi. Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18
 - vii. Isaiah 8:19-20; Jeremiah 23:16
- b. *Sola Fide* is a novel and unbiblical teaching – Key texts:
 - i. James 2:24; Matthew 16:27 **BUT...**
 - ii. Titus 3:5; Romans 3:27-30; 4:5; 5:1
[Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9, etc.]

4. Protestantism is not historical:

- a. *Sola Scriptura* cannot be found before the Reformation, **BUT...**
 - i. “Thou shalt never forsake the commandments of the Lord but shalt keep those things which thou hast received, neither adding to them nor taking away from them.” (Didache 4:13)

¹ Tradition and teachings have real importance, but Scripture is the only *infallible* rule of our faith and practice; all else is subordinate to it and is to be measured by it.

- ii. "We have the Lord as the source of teaching- both by the Prophets, the gospel and the blessed apostles...He, then, who of himself believes the Scripture and the voice of the Lord (which by the Lord acts to benefit of men) is rightly [regarded] as being faithful. Certainly we use it as a criterion in the discovery of things." Clement of Alexandria 150 A.D.
- iii. "[The Church] unites the Law and the Prophets in one volume with the writings of evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks in her faith." Tertullian
- iv. "In the two Testaments every word that appertains to God may be sought and discussed, and out of them all knowledge of things may be understood." – Origen
- v. "There is, brethren, one God, the knowledge of whom we gain from the Holy Scriptures and from no other source." – Hippolytus ("Refutation of All Heresies," 220 A.D.).
- vi. "For the things which are placed in the Scriptures by the inspiration and command of God, suggest to us the compendium of truth, and do not allow faith to waver in the questions proposed." – Cyprian of Carthage 240 A.D.
- vii. "In the innumerable books that have been written latterly we may sometimes find the same truth as in Scripture, but there is not the same authority." – Augustine (390ish A.D.).

[Is it reasonable to assert that the early church did not believe that all matters of doctrine and practice would be determined by and subject to "the two Testaments"? Practically speaking, the question is not about whether the RC is the final authority on the *interpretation* of apostolic doctrine but whether the RC can *authoritatively add* doctrines to what the Holy Spirit wrote down for us.]

b. Sola Fide cannot be found before the Reformation, **BUT...**

- i. "And so we, having been called through His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, whereby the Almighty God justified all men that have been from the beginning; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Clement 32:4)
- ii. No longer by the blood of goats and of sheep... are sins purged, but by faith, through the blood of Christ and his death." Justin Martyr
- iii. "O the unexpected blessing, that the sinfulness of many should be hidden in one righteous man, while the righteousness of one should justify many sinners!" Epistle to Diognesis
- iv. "If Abraham believed in God and it was imputed to him for righteousness, then each one, who believes in God and lives by faith, is found to be a righteous person." Cyprian.

5. The fruit of Protestantism is disunity and heresy:

- a. Protestants are unified on the fundamentals of the faith, i.e. Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, etc.
- b. "Disunity" and the multiplication of denominations is with respect to 2nd and 3rd tier issues.
 - i. The Catholic Church has a myriad of orders, congregations, communities, etc. that also separate on 2nd and 3rd tier issues.
 - ii. Catholics often use special pleading: "look at all the division, but don't look at ours".
 - Protestant failures are used against them while Catholic failures are explained away.
 - "Heresy" has been equally a part of Catholic and Protestant practitioners, but Protestants do not claim to be the "indefectible" institution of the Church; and if heresies negate Protestantism, how much more do they negate Roman Catholicism?
- c. The fruit of Catholicism has been wild superstition, gross institutional immorality and corruption, multiple new and false teachings (Mary, the treasury of merit, indulgences, etc.).
 - The RC claims to have the pure, holy, and "indefectible" teachings and to be the only pure, holy, and visible institution of the Church. Protestants do not.
 - See Matthew 7:15-23.