

The Inquisition

Did the Catholic Church murder thousands (and even millions) of people during the Inquisition? Unfortunately, the popular understanding of this period of history has been grossly distorted by the “Black Legend,” a propaganda campaign conducted by sixteenth-century English Protestants intent on vilifying Catholic Spain. The fact is, only a small number of those tried by the Spanish Inquisition were condemned, about 1.8%; and an even smaller number, about 0.1%, were actually put to death (“Balanced History of the Inquisition Is Possible, Says Expert,” *Zenit*, June 16, 2004; zenit.org). While many abuses did occur, for which the Church feels deep remorse, it is imperative to keep certain facts in mind. First, while the Church tried cases, those found guilty were handed over to civil authorities and subjected to punishments that were commonplace in the Middle Ages. And though the Church sanctioned the use of torture, she also imposed strict limits upon its use, unheard of at the time. It was permitted only as a last resort, was never to be used on an individual more than once, and was never to result in the loss of life or limb (Pope Innocent IV, *Ad exstirpanda*). As a matter of fact, the accused typically preferred to have their cases tried by the Church as opposed to the civil authorities as the former tended to be more lenient.

Galileo

Was Galileo persecuted by the Church for teaching the sun is the center of the solar system? Far from being the enemy of science she is sometimes portrayed to be, the Catholic Church has been its truest patroness. Many scientific pioneers, such as Gregor Mendel, Louis Pasteur, and Father Georges-Henri Lemaître, the father of the Big Bang theory, were Catholics. Polish astronomer Nicholas Copernicus was, too. Copernicus’ theory of heliocentrism, that the sun and not the earth is the center of the solar system, was supported by the Church, to the extent he dedicated his book, *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*, to Pope Paul III. Galileo, who came after him, initially enjoyed the Church’s favor as well. He made two crucial errors, though: one an error of science, the other of religion. His scientific error involved his reckless promotion of heliocentrism as truth, not theory, in spite of the fact that the empirical evidence at the time was lacking. His religious error involved the claim his findings disproved the truth of Sacred Scripture. Though it is commonly assumed the Church reprimanded Galileo for fear science might trump religion, in reality her censure of him upheld the integrity of both.

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The Truth about the Catholic Church



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learn all about
“Hitler’s Pope”

Sinful Catholics:
how can they say
the Church is holy?

Mother Teresa:
her crisis of faith

Clergy Sex Abuse:
the facts behind
the cover up

The Da Vinci Code:
pulling back the veil
on the great deception

Emperor Constantine:
the true story on
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The Inquisition:
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THE SHOCKING TRUTH INSIDE!

Pius XII

Did Pope Pius XII fail to help the Jewish people during the Holocaust and even conspire with Adolph Hitler? In reality, Pius XII did more to save Jewish lives during World War II than any other single human being. This is an historically verifiable fact. In response to his Christmas radio address in 1941, for example, *The New York Times* praised the Pope in an editorial for his opposition to the Nazis, declaring, “He is about the only ruler left on the Continent of Europe who dares to raise his voice at all” (December 25, 1941, Late Day Edition). Moreover, at the Pope’s command monasteries, churches, and homes throughout Europe opened their doors to hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees, even printing fake baptismal certificates to conceal their ethnicity. Thousands of Jews, in fact, were given sanctuary during the war by Pius XII personally at the Vatican and at Castel Gondolfo, his summer residence. It is also true that when Israel Zolli, the then-Chief Rabbi of Rome, converted to Catholicism, he took the Pope’s given name, “Eugenio,” as his baptismal name out of gratitude for all Pius had done for the Jews.

Sinful Catholics

How can Catholics call the Church holy when there are sinners in the Church? Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a field in which “wheat and weeds” would be allowed to grow alongside one another until the end of time (*Matt.* 13:24-30). Unfortunately, along with the good people in the Catholic Church there are wicked people as well—among the clergy and laity alike. The sinfulness of the Church’s members, though, does not disprove her divine origin any more than the sinfulness of the Israelites—including even some of their leaders, such as King David (cf. *2 Sam.* 11:2 ff.)—disproved Israel’s divine origin. This having been said, however, the accusations leveled against the Church are sometimes grossly exaggerated. Many imply that the majority of Popes were great sinners, for example, when in reality the “bad Popes” amount only to about two dozen of the total 265! This adds up to about 1 in 12, the same ratio of bad to good in the Twelve Apostles, handpicked by Jesus Himself. Those who oppose the Church are typically unaware of the great good she has brought to mankind over the millennia. Few realize, for instance, that the hospital and the university are Catholic inventions. The first person in history to write against slavery was a Catholic as well: Saint Patrick, who evangelized Ireland in 432 A.D.

Mother Teresa

Did Mother Teresa of Calcutta doubt the existence of God? It is true that in her private letters she wrote, “So many unanswered questions live within me afraid to uncover them—because of the blasphemy—If there be God—please forgive me” (David Van Biema, “Mother Teresa’s Crisis of Faith,” *Time Magazine*, August 23, 2007). Her critics on this matter, though, lack the spiritual insight to really understand the nature of her remarks. In expressing her “doubts,” Mother Teresa was speaking from her emotions, not from her intellect or will. In other words, she remained intellectually convinced of God’s existence (the proof of this is that she continued faithfully to do his work among the poor), but had lost the sensation of his presence. This phenomenon, dubbed “the dark night of the soul” in religious circles, is common in the lives of the Saints. Remember, even Jesus himself cried out on the Cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” (*Matt.* 27:46). This does not mean He suddenly stopped believing in God, but that at that moment he could no longer *feel* God’s closeness. In reality, the dark night experience signifies not a lack of faith, but that the individual’s faith has grown strong enough for God to test at an extreme level.

Clergy Sex Abuse

Did Catholic leaders try to cover up the priest sex abuse scandal before the secular media broke the story in 2002? It cannot be denied that children were abused by priests and that bishops concealed the abuse for years. And the Church was rightly subject to scorn and indignation in the wake of these horrible revelations. The media, though, has been guilty of concealing information on the matter, too. It was in large part not reported, for instance, that 1) the Church took positive steps to end the crisis as early as 1984, nearly two decades before the story broke; 2) the number of active priests accused of abuse declined sharply from under 3 percent in the 1990’s to near zero in 2000 and beyond (“Who Are the Men Who Commit Child Abuse,” *Tidings Online*, Feb. 10, 2006; the-tidings.com); and 3) the rate of sexual abuse of minors is far higher in many other institutions. The U.S. Department of Education, for instance, reported that “between 6 percent and 10 percent of public school children across the country have been sexually abused or harassed by school employees and teachers” (Jon E. Dougherty, “Sex Abuse by Teachers Said Worse Than Catholic Church,” *Newsmax*, April 5, 2004; archive.newsmax.com).

The Da Vinci Code

Did the Catholic Church hide the real “truth” about Jesus: that he was not divine, but merely a man, and that he married Mary Magdalene? Such allegations are promoted by *The Da Vinci Code*, which has enjoyed tremendous popularity. Although this book gives the appearance of having been thoroughly researched, however, it remains a work of fiction and its claims are easily debunked by a sincere investigation of history. It says, for instance, that Jesus was not worshipped as a deity before the fourth century. Yet there is a wealth of historical evidence to the contrary, even from non-Christian sources. The famed Jewish historian, Josephus, for example, writing in about the year 93 A.D., documented Jesus’ trial, death, and resurrection, saying, “He appeared to [those that loved him] alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him” (*Antiquities* 18:3:3). In about 112 A.D., the Roman governor Pliny the Younger, moreover, complained that Christians “were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god” (*Letter to the Emperor Trajan* 10:96-97). As for the notion that Jesus married Mary Magdalene, no reliable ancient source makes mention of it and the idea is found only in apocryphal writings originating more than a century and a half after his death.

Emperor Constantine

Did the Emperor Constantine the Great start the Catholic Church? In 313 A.D., Constantine legalized Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. Some who deny the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ have claimed she came into being at this time, the result of an unholy mixing of pagan and Christian beliefs. The existence of Catholic teaching in historical Christian writings that predate Constantine, however, disproves their theory. The first recorded use of the term “catholic” as a proper name for the Christian Church, in fact, appears in a writing by Ignatius of Antioch, an early bishop and disciple of the Apostle John, martyred in Rome in about 107 A.D.—a full two centuries before Constantine. Writing to Christians in Smyrna shortly before his death, Ignatius used the Church’s Eucharistic teaching to combat the Gnostics who denied Christ had come in the flesh. “They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer,” he wrote, “because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in His goodness, raised up again” (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 7:1).