

Identifying the Early Church By Richard Bennett

From April 15-20, 2008 Benedict XVI visited the United States and the United Nations as the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church and first representative of the Holy See. Thus the President welcomed him with the words, “This is your first trip to the United States since you ascended to the Chair of Saint Peter.”¹ Both Benedict’s title and his ‘Chair’ are presumed to exist by the dogma of apostolic succession. In fact, it is required in the Catholic Church that one believes in an historical continuity between the early Church and the Roman Catholic Church as defined by the papal dogma of apostolic succession.² Catholics are taught not to question this dogma. Based on it, the present Pope has flatly stated that “Christian Communities born out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century cannot be called ‘Churches’ in the proper sense...[they] do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element of the church.”³ He is not speaking in a vacuum, but rather in a time when many people are being seduced through dialogue and other methods into the Roman Catholic Church. For example, the American President said to him, “Most of all, Holy Father, you will find in America people whose hearts are open to your message of hope. And America and the world need this message.”⁴ The Pope’s message was consistently vacuous, totally without the Gospel of grace, stooping even to pray for the dead at Ground Zero. His words were, “O God of love, compassion, and healing, look on us, people of many different faiths and traditions, who gather today at this site, the scene of incredible violence and pain. We ask you in your goodness to give eternal light and peace to all who died here...”⁵

As they are, these words based in anti-biblical doctrine come from a man who claims to be head of the true church of Christ Jesus. His actions, too, in performing the Mass, which is heretical, are perfectly consistent with his position against the Reformation blossoming of the true churches in the sixteenth century, whose biblical heritage is undeniable. Therefore in this presentation we want to document the New Testament concept of church and give historical data showing that the biblical concept of church was indeed lived in the times after the Apostles and prior to the Reformation.

Biblical Concept of Church

Christ Jesus founded His church on the Gospel message that He is “*the Christ*” (the Anointed-Messiah) and “*the Son of the Living God*.”⁶ After the Lord’s glorification, the Holy Spirit empowered all the believers that were assembled at Jerusalem to take the Gospel throughout the world. According to the New Testament, the first church to be established was the church in Jerusalem. It was from there that the believers went forth with the Gospel. They were the

¹ <http://z22.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080416.html> 4/21/08

² “The Catholic faithful *are required to profess* that there is an historical continuity—rooted in the apostolic succession between the Church founded by Christ and the Catholic Church:...” Official Declaration “Dominus Iesus” 2000 §16. Italic in the original.

³ “Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church.” www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html 8/10/2007

⁴ www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080416.html 4/21/2008

⁵ <http://www.wnbc.com/news/15937320/detail.html> 4/21/2008

⁶ Matthew 16:16-17

“church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”⁷ The New Testament also records the establishment of the local churches in Judea and Samaria. The Gospel then spread to cities in Cypress and to Antioch. When the believers in Jerusalem heard that the people in Antioch had received the Gospel, they sent Barnabas to them. Barnabas first went to Tarsus to fetch Paul. Together they spent a whole year at Antioch teaching the Gospel of grace through faith alone in Christ Jesus. It was there that those who believed the Gospel were first called Christians. The Apostle Paul appointed elders⁸ and deacons in these local churches. These offices, however, are not the very essence of the church; rather, they function for teaching and administration so that the assembly is orderly. The unifying center of the assembly of believers is not the structure of the group, as the Pope maintains, but rather it is the Gospel.

The Greek word “ekklesia” literally means “the called out ones.” In the New Testament it is applied to the whole company of believers throughout the present era, of whom Christ said, “I will build my Church.”⁹ The Apostle Paul’s definition under the direction of the Holy Spirit is that the church is Christ’s body.¹⁰ Most regularly the word signifies the local assembly of believers. The central feature of the New Testament letters is the Gospel of grace through faith alone as, for example, in the letter to the believers at Ephesus, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”¹¹ The expression “the church of God” was collective, as when the Apostle wrote, “give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God,”¹² meaning the believers as distinguished from the Jews and Gentiles. The ordinary believers are continually called the “church” as the Apostle addressed them, “unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus.”¹³ “And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans.”¹⁴ The church was simply the community of believers. All the messages given by the Lord through the Apostle John were also to local churches.¹⁵

The unifying factor that designated early local churches was the Gospel. These local churches believed and taught the Gospel of God’s grace. That Gospel was for them “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”¹⁶ Faith alone, consistent with the Scriptures, was the means by which the believers entered into the salvation purchased by the perfect life and sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Across Europe and Asia, local churches were established as ordinary believers spread the Gospel.

The Roman Catholic Concept of Church

The Vatican requires that Catholics profess that there is an historical continuity between the

⁷ Acts 8:1

⁸ The terms overseer and elder/pastor are used interchangeably (Acts 20:17, 28; I Peter 5:1-4).

⁹ Matthew 16:18

¹⁰ Ephesians 1:22-23

¹¹ Ephesians 2:8, 9

¹² Corinthians 10:32

¹³ I Corinthians 1:2

¹⁴ Colossians 4:16

¹⁵ Revelation 1:11

¹⁶ Romans 1:16

church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ and the Roman Catholic Church. To assess the validity of the Catholic belief, it needs to be held firmly in mind that the Roman Catholic Church means something quite different by the word “Church” than the New Testament does. While the teaching Magisterium does mention the Church as “the People of God,” “the Body of Christ,” and “the Temple of the Holy Spirit,” the emphasis is always on the authority and mission of the papal organizational system. Thus Rome teaches, “He [Christ] instituted the Church. He gave her authority and mission, orientation and goal...”¹⁷ How this claimed power structure is exercised is clearly laid out by the Roman Catholic system: “There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive.”¹⁸ “Priests have received from God a power that he has given neither to angels nor to archangels.... God above confirms what priests do here below.”¹⁹ “‘Believing’ is an ecclesial act. The Church’s faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith. The Church is the mother of all believers. ‘No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother.’”²⁰ The claimed absolute power of the papal hierarchical system is totally contrary to the New Testament concept of the church as “the assembly of believers.” The Papacy’s lust for power is so insatiable that it claims power for itself, which rightfully belongs to the Holy Spirit. Thus the Magisterium officially teaches, “For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.”²¹ How does such dogma reflect any historical continuity with biblical doctrine and the practice of the authentic early church?

Early Believers and Scripture

The early believers held to the Scriptures as being the absolute Word of God’s truth. The early Church understood apostolic doctrine as the written Word of God. From the very start of the post-apostolic age in the writings of such Apostolic Fathers as Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement, and Barnabas, there was an exclusive appeal to the Scriptures for the positive teaching of doctrine and for defense against heresy. In the writings of these men, the authority cited is that of the Old and New Testaments. In the written texts of the apologists, such as Justin Martyr and Athenagoras, the same exclusive appeal to Scripture is evident. There was no appeal in any of these writings to the authority of an extra-biblical tradition as a separate body of revelation. Rather, it is in the writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian in the mid to late second century that the concept of an apostolic tradition, which was handed down in the Church in oral form, was first encountered. Irenaeus and Tertullian stated forcefully that all the teachings of the bishops that were given orally were rooted in Scripture and could be proven from the written Scriptures.

Examples of Early Believers Testifying to the Gospel

Polycarp of Smyrna (born c. 69) died a martyr somewhere around the year 155. He testified to being saved through grace and Christ Jesus, “...the Lord Jesus Christ...in whom you believe...knowing, that through grace ye are saved, not from works, but by the will of God, through Christ Jesus.”²² Clement of Rome, who died about the year 100, wrote of being justified

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), Para 874

¹⁸ *Catechism*, Para 982

¹⁹ *Catechism*, Para 983

²⁰ *Catechism*, Para 181

²¹ *Catechism*, Para 882

²² George Stanley Faber, *The Primitive Doctrine of Justification, Investigated* (London: R. B. Seely and W. Burnside, 1837) Ch. IV, p. 87

by faith, "...Therefore, we also, being called through his (God's) will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves, neither through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works...but through Faith."²³

Justin Martyr (c. 100—165) wrote of being righteous before God on account of faith. He stated, "It was not by reason of circumcision that Abraham was testified of God to be righteous, but on account of faith. For, before he was circumcised, it was said of him: Abraham believed in God; and it was imputed unto him for righteousness."²⁴

Irenaeus, who died about the year 190, or as late as 202, clearly explained the Gospel message in Romans, Chapter Three: "When Christ came, he accomplished all things: and still, in the Church, continues to accomplish the New Testament, foretold by the Law, even to consummation. As also the Apostle Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans: but now, without the Law, the righteousness of God is manifested, being testified of by the Law and the Prophets: for the just shall live by faith. But, that the just shall live by faith, had been foretold by the Prophets."²⁵

Clement of Alexandria, a contemporary of Justin and Irenaeus in the late second and early third century, gave evidence to the Gospel of grace when he wrote, "Abraham was justified, not from works, but from faith. After the end of life, therefore, it is no profit to men even though now they shall have performed good works, unless they have faith."²⁶

Athanasius, in the fourth century, likewise testifies of grace and redemption in a clear-cut Gospel message, "Not from these, but from faith, a man is justified; as also was Abraham. Having thus discussed such points, the Apostle shews again: that, in no other manner, can there be redemption and grace to Israel and to the Gentiles, except the original sin, which through Adam passed unto all, be loosed. But this, says he, can be blotted out though no other than through the Son of God.... For it was impossible, that any other should loose this transgression. Thus, as through one man sin entered into the world: thus also, through one man, grace came upon all."²⁷

Extensive Growth and Severe Persecution

The spread of the Christian faith during the first three centuries was rapid and extensive. In the providence of God, the main reasons for this were the fidelity and zeal of the preachers of the Gospel, the heroic deaths of the martyrs, the translation of the Scriptures into the languages of the Roman world, and the well-developed and expansive Roman road system over which the Gospel was carried. Under the Emperor Septimius Severus (193-211), Christians suffered appallingly. The most severe persecution was under the Emperor Diocletian and his co-regent, Galerius, during the years 303-311. Yet, far from exterminating the Christians and the Gospel, the persecution purified those who preached and increased their ability to give the Gospel message.

²³ Ibid., p. 80

²⁴ Ibid., p. 89

²⁵ Ibid., p. 94

²⁶ Ibid, p. 96

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 100-101

Early Church: Northern Italy and the Cottian Alps

Since at least the late eleventh century,²⁸ the Roman Catholic Church has loudly alleged that the early churches, in what is known today as Northern Italy,²⁹ were simply those churches that had fallen away from the authority of the Bishop of Rome. However, Peter Allix, writing in 1690, shows clearly that these churches were established locally from apostolic times and were not under the Bishop of Rome at any time before the eleventh century. Of their doctrine and practice he states, “It is sufficient to make them deserve the name of apostolical, that they received the doctrine of the Apostles, as a pledge from the hand of their first disciples, which they preserved so very tenderly throughout the following ages.”³⁰ Allix’s rebuttal of the Roman Catholic charge uses quotations from these churches’ liturgy and from records of the practice of their faith, which regularly included record of increasing disagreement with the Bishop of Rome. At times, Allix quotes the records of the Roman Catholic Church against the believers, showing that the very things of which the Roman Church was accusing them were in fact biblical.

According to Faber, in about the year 406, Vigilantius, a native of Aquitaine, published a treatise in answer to Jerome’s defense of his [Jerome’s] departure from Scripture. In it, Vigilantius “attacked the notion that celibacy is the duty of the clergy; censured...the figment that they [martyrs] are potent intercessors at the throne of grace; ridiculed the blind and almost idolatrous reverence which was paid to their relics; exposed the folly of burning tapers, like the Pagans, before their shrines, in broad day-light; detected the pretended miracles said to be wrought by their senseless remains...pointed out the useless absurdity of pilgrimages either to Jerusalem or to any other reputed sanctuary.”³¹ Although Vigilantius’s treatise is no longer extant, this information comes from Jerome as he seeks to refute Vigilantius during the course of their exchanges. According to Jerome, who resided in Jerusalem, Vigilantius “wrote from a region, situated between the waves of the Adriatic and the Cottian Alps.”³² Nor was Jerome able to have Vigilantius extirpated from this region, where he worked as a presbyter, because the bishop of the area agreed with Vigilantius. Faber’s point is this:

“This district [where Vigilantius was residing] on the eastern side of the Cottian Alps is the precise country of the Vallenses. Here they *claim* to have lived at least from the time of Pope Sylvester; and *here*, in point of *fact*, as we may presumptively gather from the present remarkable statement of Jerome, that they were actually settled as early as in and before the year 406....

“Here, therefore, only seventy years after the death of Pope Sylvester, we actually find a Church in the valleys of the Cottian Alps, the theological condition of which exactly corresponds with the account handed down, from generation to generation, among the Vallenses themselves: that is to say, we actually find a Church, in the very region where the account teaches us to seek it, protesting, through the mouth of its approved pastor, Vigilantius...against the superstitions of the times, and, in its estimate of those

²⁸ J. A. Wylie, *History of Protestantism* Vol. I, pp. 10-15. See also Peter Allix, *Some Remarks upon the Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Church of Piedmont*, originally printed in 1690; 1989 reprint of 1821 edition, p. 192.

²⁹ Allix, *Ancient Church of Piedmont*, p. 1. See also Thomas M’Crie, *History of the Progress & Suppression of the Reformation in Italy in the Sixteenth Century* (Edinburgh & London: Wm. Blackwood & Sons, 1856).

³⁰ Allix, p. 4.

³¹ George Stanley Faber, Personal letter to Dr. Gilly quoted in William Stephen Gilly, *Vigilantius and His Times* (London: Seeley, Burnside, & Seeley, 1844) Reprint. pp.335-338.

³² *Ibid.*

superstitions, openly differing from the bishops of the corrupt Church of Rome.”³³

The Roman Catholic claim for dominion in the area is refuted by the written record of Jerome’s correspondence with Vigilantius. Further, Pope Pelagius I (555) lamented that “The Bishops of Milan do not come to Rome for ordination,” and this was in accordance with “an ancient custom of theirs.”³⁴ Allix further notes, “In the year 590, the Bishops of Italy and of the Grisons, to the number of nine, rejected the Communion of the Pope, as of an heretic...protesting [to the Emperor] that they could not communicate with Pope Gregory the First.”³⁵

Allix documents the fact that even in the ninth century the churches of Northern Italy were still not under the yoke of papal authority. Rather they were able to hold out until after the death of Claude, Bishop of Turin. Claude, in the mid-ninth century, staunchly defended his diocese against Rome while simultaneously and indefatigably teaching the Gospel and the Bible throughout his diocese by preaching and by writing. Wylie confirms that it was not until the mid-eleventh century that the churches on the plains of Northern Italy finally succumbed to papal authority. Even then the churches in the valleys of the Cottian Alps held true to the Bible in their faith and practice. These are they who were known as the Vaudois, or People of the Valleys.³⁶

Faber shows from the text of the Vaudois poem, *Noble Lesson*, which has imbedded in it the date of 1100, that the language in which the document is written is “derived, **without any intervention of an older derivative language**, from the decomposed stock of its parent Latin.” This was the language of the Vaudois who had retreated to the valleys of Italian Cottian Alps during the second, third, and fourth centuries. Since the *Noble Lesson* was one of their documents, it shows conclusively that the language of the Vaudois had not changed substantially in all the centuries they lived hidden in their valleys. This confession of faith in poetic form was used to teach their children “*the faith once delivered to the saints.*” Here, then, are conclusive pieces of evidence—Jerome’s recording of Vigilantius in 406, Claude Bishop of Turin in the early 800’s, and the language in which the *Noble Lesson* (written in 1100) and other earlier original documents which Samuel Morland procured in 1655—that the Vaudois or Vallenses really were preserved by God in the line of unbroken apostolic faith from the early centuries through the Reformation.

It should be noted, the Vaudois are sometimes called Waldenses. The Roman Catholic Church’s consistent policy has been to try to confuse the origin of the early churches of the Valleys. It contended that it was Peter Waldo who established these churches, thus maintaining that they were heretics rather than the true church. However, the still extant historical facts make it clear that the Papacy’s long record of revisionist history is as false today as it was at its inception many centuries ago. One very important fact is that Peter Waldo was not known before 1160 while the *Noble Lesson* was written in 1100. In 1690 Allix contends, “it is not true that [Peter] Waldo gave this name to the inhabitants of the valleys: They were called Wallenses, or Vaudés, before his time, from the valleys in which they dwelt. This we find...in Ebrardus de

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Wylie, Vol. I, Book I, p. 19

³⁵ Letter to Emperor Mauritius as recorded in Baronius, *ad h. annum*, n. 29, in Allix, *Ancient Church of Piedmont*, p. 35.

³⁶ Peter Allix, *Remarks upon the Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of the Albigenses*, first published in 1692. 1989 Reprint of the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1821 edition.

Bethune, who wrote in the year 1212, where he asserts, that they called themselves Wallenses...because they abode in the ‘valley of tears.’ so that we see that this etymology rather has respect to the place where they lived, which was in the valleys of Piedmont, than to the name of Peter Waldo.”³⁷

The testimony of the Vaudois, both in their writing and in their practice, showed that the authority of the Bible continued to be their rule of life.³⁸ The first distinguishing principle of the Waldenses bore on their daily conduct, and was summed up in the words of the apostle: “*We ought to obey God rather than men.*”³⁹ The second principle was the authority and popular use of the Holy Scriptures, which they had in their native language. There were those among them who could quote the entire Bible from memory. The third distinguishing principle was the importance of preaching and the rights of believing men to exercise that function. To these fundamental principles, based on the Sermon on the Mount, the Vaudois added the rejection of oaths, the condemnation into purgatory, and prayers for the dead. There are only two ways after death, they declared—the way to heaven and the way to hell. The pre-Reformation Vaudois faith and practice touched many people through those dark centuries. They regularly sent out missionaries (many of whom were merchants) to evangelize Europe, and these missionaries attracted converts from many sources. They were, however, to suffer terribly for their faith.

It is an historical fact that these churches of Northern Italy, which had remained faithful to the Scripture from the time of their establishment in the second, third, and fourth centuries through the Reformation, were the true churches. The Papal Church clearly was, and is still today, the heretical schismatic. It is the historical account of these ancient biblical churches in northern Italy and southern France that the Roman Catholic Church has been trying for at least the past nine centuries to wipe out—ethnic cleansing of them by crusades and six hundred years of Inquisition against them, by destruction of the records of their testimony, and by revisionist history. It is by the providence of God that to this very day Papal Rome has not succeeded.

The Paulician Churches from the First Century

The Paulician churches were of apostolic origin, and they were planted in Armenia in the first century. “Through Antioch and Palmyra the faith must have spread into Mesopotamia and Persia; and in those regions become the basis of the faith as it is spread in the Taurus mountains as far as Ararat. This was the primitive form of Christianity. The churches in the Taurus range of mountains formed a huge recess or circular dam into which flowed the early Paulician faith to be caught and maintained for centuries, as it were, a backwater from the main for centuries.”⁴⁰ The earliest center of Christianity in Armenia was at Taron, which was the constant home and base of operations of the Paulicians. They claimed that they were of apostolic origin. Upon this point Adeney says, “Therefore, it is quite arguable that they should be regarded as representing

³⁷ Allix, pp. 182-183.

³⁸ See *The Noble Lesson* and other works, a catalog of which is recorded in Samuel Morland, *The History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piemont* (Henry Hills, 1658) Reprint. Morland was sent by Oliver Cromwell to put pressure on the Duke of Savoy to stop the “bloody massacre” of the Vaudois in 1655. Morland received many original manuscripts of the Vaudois at that time and put them in the public library at the University of Cambridge, from which they shortly disappeared. Morland in his two volume *History* was careful to quote widely from these original sources.

³⁹ Acts 5:29

⁴⁰ Bury’s edition of Gibbon’s *History*, VI. p. 543

the survival of a most primitives type of Christianity...Ancient Oriental Baptists, these people were in many respects Protestants before Protestantism.”⁴¹

In the eighth century the Paulicians, scattered by persecution, spread westward through Bulgaria and along the northern coast of the Mediterranean as far as the Pyrenees Mountains. Many settled in southern France where they became known as the Albigenses. All along the way, the Paulicians planted local churches, which continued strong in biblical doctrine and practice.⁴² They did not recognize persons of other communions as belonging to the churches. “We do not belong to these,” they said. “They have long ago broken connection with the church and have been excluded.”⁴³

Pre-Reformation Missionaries to Europe

From the year 405, when Patrick arrived in Ireland, there were more than six hundred years of fruitfulness from the clarity of the Gospel message preached by Patrick and those who worked with him. There were many famous Irish missionaries like Patrick, such as Columba, Columbanus, Kilian and Forannan, who carried the Gospel well up to the tenth century to Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, and beyond with the same truthfulness as Patrick. From at least the eleventh century onward, the Vaudois sent their missionaries, called Barbes, throughout Europe. They carried the same Gospel message, as did the Irish missionaries. In 1209, the Papacy began its first crusade against European believers, starting with the Albigenses in southern France. Those who could escape did. They spread the Gospel wherever they were scattered. In about 1332, Pope John XXII sent his inquisitors into the territory of the Vaudois to execute the laws of the Inquisition against these believers. From then on, the Vaudois were scattered throughout France, the Low Countries, Germany, Poland, Bohemia, Moravia, England, Calabria, Naples, and further. They, too, spread the Gospel wherever they went.⁴⁴

The Legacy of the Early Church

We have identified the true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ by two marks—they hold to the sole authority of Scriptures and to the true Gospel. We have briefly documented the true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ as it existed in various countries before the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Down through the centuries, these believers were scattered from Jerusalem to the Piedmont valley of Italy, to France, Spain, Scotland, Ireland, England, and throughout all of Europe. We have documented various peoples honoring the true faith, and bearing the Scriptural truth.

Conclusion

The stark reality of the facts of history of the true church permeated with the Gospel of God’s grace in doctrine and practice utterly voids the papal assertion of an historical continuity between the early believers and the papal church via their dogma of apostolic succession. Rather the Roman Catholic Church is the proven schismatic from the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴¹ Adeney, *The Greek and Eastern Churches*, pp. 217-219

⁴² George Stanley Faber, *The History of the Ancient Vallenses and Albigenses* (London, 1828) Book II & III.

⁴³ Such is the testimony of Gregory Magistos, A. D., 1058, whose history is one of the chief sources of information. For the documentation see “Paulicians and Bogomil Churches”

www.pbministries.org/History/John%20T.%20Christian/vol1/history_04.htm 4/8/2008

⁴⁴ Wylie, Vol. III, Book 16th.

As the true church saw (prior to the Reformation and the Reformers), the papal system with its blasphemies against the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ, its idolatry and Inquisition, its claim to apostolic succession—all these show “*the woman*” “*sitting upon the scarlet-colored beast*.”⁴⁵ The same woman, “*drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*”⁴⁶ is still today making merchandise of the souls of men while purporting to “dialogue” with true Christians as “brothers and sisters in Christ.”

However, the cautious understand that the love for the Papacy is hazardous, such so, as to bring to mind the Scripture, “*all the world wondered after the beast*.”⁴⁷ They have noted that, as with the funeral of John Paul II, so also with April 2008’s visit of Benedict XVI to the United States. Both were widely received with such reverence and awe as to be called adoration.

Like true believers of old, we must enter into battle. The Lord is with us; we will have the final victory. The command of the Holy Spirit is still this: “*having done all, to stand. Stand therefore*.”⁴⁸ The certainty that we know Him and are His should animate our efforts, and encourage us in our struggles. The glory of God’s free grace in the Gospel, based on the written Word of Scripture alone, remains the legacy of the Early Church and is still available to all the Lord’s people. ♦

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⁴⁵ Revelation 17:3 Raynerius, a papal inquisitor who lived before the middle of the thirteenth century, testified of the Vallenses, “They hold the Church of Rome to be the whore of Babylon, and that all that obey her are damned....” Quoted in Allix, pp. 209-211.

⁴⁶ Revelation 17:6

⁴⁷ Revelation 13:3

⁴⁸ Ephesians 6:13,14