

Chapter 2 – Messages to the church in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos and Thyatira

It is noteworthy that, through these messages there are several elements that are universal.

- The message is addressed to a specific group
- They reference the elements of the authority introduced in Chapter 1
- They begin with an encouragement/commendation
- They include a reproof
- They include a warning
- They conclude with a blessing

What we find, as we study them in depth, is they also reflect the experience of God's people throughout its history. This is somewhat open to interpretation, but as we examine the history of the Christian movements, we find that the experience of the church through time reflects the qualities and challenges of the universal church.

It must be made very clear that John is not trying to address the church throughout time in these notes, but rather we can deduce that it is Jesus intention to map out the churches experience before his return. To be very clear, the Adventist interpretation – which I agree with – that the different Churches reflect different time periods of the overall experience, is highly circumstantial and the alternate interpretation; that this is specifically for a time and place, is equally valid.

As stated in the previous chapter, there is also a highly personal application to the individual reader, but as this is only applicable through personal study, its not going to be a part of our discussion here.

Local Group:

1 “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,

Authority Reference:

‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

Commendation:

2 “I know your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary.

Reproof:

4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Warning:

5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.

6 But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Blessing:

7 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” ’

Local Group:

Ephesus was the senior city in Asia and probably the most important or senior church at the time. Paul, and John spent quite a lot of time in Ephesus. It’s theorised that around the same time the Revelation was written, the Disciple was writing the Gospel of John either in Ephesus or as a letter to Ephesus.

Authority Reference:

Jesus is addressed as the one who both walks among the churches and the one who holds the churches in his hand. This is a loving, fatherly response to his children’s experiences during the time of trial they were experiencing. It’s also a very present introduction inasmuch as Jesus is saying I am there, now, at that time.

Commendation:

The encouragement here is twofold. The Church is said to be hard working and eager to accomplish a great many things, and its complemented for testing all those who claim to speak from Jesus. They do not permit anyone through that does not have the ability to support their claims; rather they test everyone that comes in front of them.

Reproof:

The reproof here is probably the most powerful of all recorded. You have forgotten the very concept of Salvation. You have forgotten the law from which you have been saved and forgotten the blessings of salvation being a promise of God. This leads us into the teachings of the Nicolaitans.

Nicolaitans:

These were an early church, Gnostic sect that taught achieving salvation was simply through belief and that no change was necessary to the actions of the individual. One could continue to practise old worship styles with old God, and not have to make any substantial changes when becoming a Christian.

There is some evidence that this group also believed that sexual abstinence or monogamy was part of mosaic law and done away with at the cross. This is a good example of the

viewpoint that these groups considered law to be completed and no longer anything to be considered; rather belief is all that is necessary.

Warning:

Repent. It's a simple enough reproof. Change your ways. Stop what you're doing and do the right thing. By continuing doing the wrong thing, Jesus threatens that he will 'remove their candle from the lampstand' in other words, he will let them simply be overwhelmed and destroyed.

Blessing:

Anyone that repents or does not engage in these practises is promised eternal life.

Time Period: 33-100AD

This experience closely aligns itself to the early church, when there were a wide swirl of different viewpoints and beliefs and rather complicated relationship with the Jewish nations that, obviously, killed Christ. The early church realised that the relationship with the Mosaic Law was broken and that a new law had to be enacted. This was complicated by the lack of legal language in Christ's speeches which permitted such concepts as the Nicolaitan 'free-for-all' that evidently came about.

The Early church is a time when a lot of mixed beliefs and doctrines, as well as governance styles and organisations, started to develop quickly, some of which take them away from simply trusting in God and onto the trust in individuals. Indeed, the excessive indulgence the last chapter had with John presenting himself as the friend of all these churches could easily lead one to view this as an element of a cult of personality, which most named early church members have. John, for example, has been the name of 21 popes and 2 antipopes; a clear sign of reverence of the individual and not, entirely, his message.

Response:

The concept of a private penance appears well established in the earliest references to in during the 8th Century, but formal confessing to a priest was about 3 centuries later. However, as early as the 2nd Century, in 'The Shepherd of Hermas', a collection of five visions granted to Hermas, a former slave, followed by commandments and parables to explain their meaning, started a deep engagement with shame that the Roman church has never shaken. As the language of Jesus is rather vague; "[you have left your first love](#)" it can be interpreted to mean any of a wide variety of practises and activities the early church needed to be recovered from. The doctrine of Shame that started in the early church has continued throughout history and is still a strong influence in Roman culture today, as its rejection is during the cultural revolution in the West during the 1960's and 70's.

Local Group:

8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,

Authority Reference:

‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

Commendation:

9 “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Warning:

10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Blessing:

11 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” ’

Local Group:

The Greek city of Smyrna (modern-day Izmir) was a large seaport and most likely a centre of spices and incenses as its name means ‘sweet smelling’. It was most likely also a fortress for the Greek and then Roman navy to resupply and protect trade in the area. Little is known about the early church in this area, and John’s statement to them here gives us no indication that they, at the time, were in danger of any heretical experiences. The lack of information is possibly likely to destruction caused by an earthquake in 178AD, after which the Romans rebuilt the city.

Authority Reference:

Christ references his authority as one who died and was resurrected; a clear and foreboding implication that this church is going to suffer. He is also promising them eternal life, as found in the blessing of this message.

Commendation:

Jesus encourages this group by stipulating that he knows their work and how hard they are doing, as well as their poverty – but counters this by saying that they are rich. He is drawing a distinction from the physical poverty the church must have been experiencing here to the spiritual wealth they were experiencing through their work for him.

Reproof:

There is no clear reproof in this encyclical, but it is clear that they are having trouble from the local Jewish synagogue. This is possibly a call to evangelise to them.

Warning:

The warning in this church's message is a strong piece of evidence that these messages were not just meant for the local group but also for a wider, and timelier, audience. The reference that they would suffer "[tribulation ten days](#)" extends to 10 literal years. We know that in Chapter 1, the author aligned himself to the Daniel structure of times and we can conclude that he understood this reference to also mean 10 years.

The time that this was being delivered – around 95AD – was a difficult time for the Christian world but widespread persecution had not yet made its way throughout the empire. In Rome, Christians were certainly persecuted, but in Judea and Asia they were under much less scrutiny. To that end, the message here is clearly meant for more than the little seafaring company.

Blessing:

As with Ephesus, all those who are faithful and do overcome will be given eternal life. They will not taste the second death, but instead will be granted life everlasting.

Time Period: 100-313AD (Edict of Milan)

Although Nero blamed the Christians for his torching of Rome in 64 and used this as an excuse for their attempted extermination; and his later successor Domitian – who was emperor when John wrote the Revelation – both had a good go at Christians, it is generally agreed that from his death in 96 until Decius in 250, most persecution of Christians was localised and small. It was most certainly not rare for a Christian to be targeted, but it was also not empirical policy to persecute them. Emperor Maximinus Thrax (173 – 238) was one of the more persecuting Emperors and arrested Pope Pontian (310 - 366; Pope from 21 July 230 to 28 September 235) and the Antipope Hippolytus of Rome (170 – 235) and exiled them to labour in the mines of Sardinia, generally regarded as a death sentence.

Almost nothing is recorded of the Church in Smyrna for most of this period, except a visit from Saint Ignatius of Antioch who wrote letters to its bishop, Polycarp around 110AD. Any localised persecution is, therefore, lost to history.

We can, however, stipulate from what we know of the time period that it's highly likely that this Church did experience some, localised, persecution that impacted on the ability of the Church to proselytise and work for Christ's will. What causes some issue here is the use of the '10 day' phrase, and it would be expected that any reference to 10 years of persecution would be noted somewhere in a record. Nevertheless, we will broaden the context.

In 249, Gaius Messius Quintus Traianus Decius became Roman Emperor and ruled with his son until 251. Prior to his reign, Gothic incursions were increasing in frequency and ferocity and several large movements across the Danube happened during his reign. Both Decius and his son, along with 3 legions, would be killed at the Battle of Abritus, also known as the Battle of Forum Terebronii, occurred near Abritus (modern Razgrad in Bulgaria) during the summer of 251, fighting the Goths.

In January 250, Decius is said to have issued one of the most remarkable Roman imperial edicts. From the numerous surviving texts from Egypt, recording the act of sacrifice, it appears that the edict itself was fairly clear:

All the inhabitants of the empire were required to sacrifice before the magistrates of their community 'for the safety of the empire' by a certain day (the date would vary from place to place and the order may have been that the sacrifice had to be completed within a specified period after a community received the edict). When they sacrificed they would obtain a certificate (libellus) recording the fact that they had complied with the order. That is, the certificate would testify the sacrificant's loyalty to the ancestral gods and to the consumption of sacrificial food and drink as well as the names of the officials who were overseeing the sacrifice.

— D. S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay AD 180–395*

46 such certificates are still in existence and their text generally reads:

To those in charge of the sacrifices of the village Theadelphia, from Aurelia Bellias, daughter of Peteres, and her daughter Kapinis. We have always been constant in sacrificing to the gods, and now too, in your presence, in accordance with the regulations, I have poured libations and sacrificed and tasted the offerings, and I ask you to certify this for us below. May you continue to prosper. (Second person's handwriting) We, Aurelius Serenus and Aurelius Hermas, saw you sacrificing. (Third person's handwriting) I, Hermas, certify. The first year of the Emperor Caesar Gaius Messias Quintus Traianus Decius Pius Felix Augustus,

— Pauni 27: 145–151

As you can imagine, this caused a lot of problems amongst Christians, for whom it was unimaginable to sacrifice to a foreign God. To be clear here, this is a sacrifice ordered *BY* the emperor - not *TO* the emperor. Romans did not think it was possible for a living person to be divine.

Noteworthy is, thanks to an edict 300 years earlier from Julius Caesar, Jews were exempted from the sacrifice, but Christians were seen as having diverged from their earlier roots and were actively working against them. Their proselytising ways made them open targets if they refused to operate under Roman law.

A number of prominent Christians did refuse to make a sacrifice and were killed in the process, including Pope Fabian in 250. "[A]nti-Christian feeling[s] led to killings at Carthage and Alexandria." However, towards the end of the second year of Decius' reign, "the ferocity of the [anti-Christian] persecution had eased off, and the earlier tradition of tolerance had begun to reassert itself." This is known as the Decian persecution.

Nevertheless, Christians had shown themselves to be outside of the norms of society and not willing to put their personal beliefs behind their loyalty to the state and populace.

It was Diocletian who then took these anti-Christian feelings and applied them in formal persecution. Coming to power in 284, by 300AD he had purged the army for Christians and,

in an attempt to resurrect the ancient Roman glory, had strengthened Roman Religious practises. Surrounded by anti-Christians, in 302 Diocletian was being encouraged to slaughter the Christians wholesale but he was hesitant as he did not want to stir the empire against him. Galerius, his subordinate co-emperor, encouraged him heavily and, after a visit to the oracle of Apollo, laws to remove Christians from society began in February, 303AD.

Response:

Exactly as the note to the church says, it was 10 years before the Christians received a reprieve in the Edict of Milan. Between 306 and 324, a series of civil wars happened between the members of the Roman Tetrarchy – the system setup by Diocletian where the empire would be split into East and West and an Emperor would manage one each working with a second, subordinate emperor.

The two senior emperors were titled the augusti and their juniors and designated successors called the caesares. Each managed a separate quarter of the Empire, but the augusti were able to give instructions to the caesares. Initially Domitian was paired with Maximian as Augusti and Galerius and Constantius were appointed caesares in March 293. Diocletian and Maximian retired on 1 May 305, raising Galerius and Constantius to the rank of augusti. Their places as caesares were in turn taken by Valerius Severus and Maximinus Daza.

The orderly system of two senior and two junior emperors endured until Constantius died in July 306, and his son Constantine was unilaterally acclaimed augustus and caesar by his father's army in York, England. Returning to the Continent, he fought a series of civil wars but emerged victorious to become the sole ruler of the Roman Empire by 324.

Important to the Church at this time, Constantius and Maximian were tolerant over, and even favoured, Christians for a good part of their leadership. While this was not absolute and persecution was still around, it was not until 312 when toleration became the norm.

Having fought his way around the empire, Constantine faced Maxentius on 28 October 312 at the famed Battle of the Milvian Bridge on the Tiber River in Italy. Constantine's 20,000 exhausted soldiers faced about 25,000 battle hardened veterans and all accounts have Constantine uncertain of victory.

During the evening of October 27th, tells us and he stressed that he had heard the story from the Emperor himself, that while army was marching to their campsite Constantine looked up to the sun and saw a cross of light above it, with it the Greek words "Ἐν Τούτῳ Νίκα", En toutō níka, usually translated into Latin as "in hoc signo vinces". The literal meaning of the phrase in Greek is "in this (sign), conquer" while in Latin it's "in this sign, you shall conquer"; a more free translation would be "Through this sign [you shall] conquer".



At first he was unsure of the meaning of the apparition, but that night he had a dream in which Christ himself explained to him that he should use the sign against his enemies. Eusebius then continues to describe the labarum, the military standard used by Constantine in his later wars against Licinius, showing the Chi-Rho sign. Chi and Rho are the first 2 letters for Christ in Greek. Constantine instructed his army to paint the Chi-Rho on their shields before the battle, explaining the meaning and the next day his army won a magnificent victory in which Maxentius was drowned.

Constantine entered Rome on October 29 and would ultimately absorb the Roman Empire to his own power. The next year, the Edict of Milan was issued jointly by the Augusti Constantine and Licinius in which Christianity was recognised and tolerated around the Empire.

These last 10 years had been bloody for Christians but the Edict of Milan brought an end to their worst phase of persecution, exactly 10 years after it started. Constantine's relationship to Christianity is open to interpretation, but that he reversed a wholesale persecution policy is not.

Local Group:

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,

Authority Reference:

'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

Commendation:

13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Reproof:

14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Warning:

16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

Blessing:

17 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” ’

Local Group:

Pergamon was one of the earliest established Christian Churches in Asia Minor, probably established by John himself. According to the Christian tradition, Antipas was appointed bishop of Pergamon by John until he was martyred there in 92 AD. Worshipers of Serapis (a Greco-Egyptian sun god) and Christians had major disagreements which quickly led to violence. An angry mob is said to have burned Saint Antipas alive in front of the Temple inside a brazen bull-like incense burner, which represented the bull god Apis (Serapis was an amalgamation deity derived from the worship of the Egyptian Osiris and Apis, the bull God.). His martyrdom is one of the first recorded in Christian history, highlighted by the Christian Scripture itself through the message sent to the Pergamon Church in the Book of Revelation. After this, Pergamon came under the jurisdiction of the Metropolis of Ephesus.

Authority Reference:

It is interesting that this is the Church Jesus chooses to address as speaking with a ‘two-edged sword’. It is most likely because this church has the most balance between the commendation and reproof given by Jesus, along with one of the sharpest warnings.

Commendation:

The death of Antipas is one of the major dating factors we can draw for the book of Revelation. That his death is mentioned indicates authorship cannot be earlier than 92AD. As stipulated, his martyrdom was clearly related to the Christian faith that Jesus here complements the Church for – and this is further expanded when we review Jesus’ words that this Church was near “[where Satan’s throne is](#)”.

When reviewing Daniel 7, we looked at the Babylonian Mysteries; a collection of beliefs and mystical rituals that the Babylonians practised. Babylon was rather tolerant of a lot of different religious structures and when conquered by the Persians in 539BC, the Persians generally kept this tradition but started to layer their own beliefs over the top. The Persians were also very dismissive of Babylonian tradition and culture, and matters came to a head in 484BC when there was a substantial uprising. This was preceded by, and concurrent with a priestly uprising around Persia and especially in Babylon.

In the Daiva inscription, a set of tablets that Xerxes claimed authorship of himself, we have this passage:

King Xerxes says: when I became king, there was among these countries one that was in rebellion. Ahuramazda bore me aid. By the grace of Ahuramazda I smote that country and put it down in its place.

And among these countries there was a place where previously demons (daiva) were worshipped. Afterwards, by the grace of Ahuramazda I destroyed that sanctuary of demons, and I proclaimed: 'The demons shall not be worshipped!' Where previously the demons were worshipped, there I worshipped Ahuramazda at the proper time and in the proper manner. And there was other business that had been done ill. That I made good. That which I did, all I did by the grace of Ahuramazda. Ahuramazda bore me aid until I completed the work.

You who may live hereafter, if you should think 'Happy may I be when living, and when dead may I be blessed,' have respect for that law which Ahuramazda has established. Worship Ahuramazda at the proper time and in the proper manner. The man who has respect for that law that Ahuramazda has established and worships Ahuramazda at the proper time and in the proper manner, he both becomes happy while alive and becomes blessed when dead.

- <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/achaemenid-royal-inscriptions/xph/>

Xerxes claims he put down the nest of Demons in this priestly uprising. Traditionally, historians have ascribed widespread destruction to the aftermath of the revolts, with Xerxes supposedly having greatly damaged the temples of Babylon and removing the Statue of Marduk, Babylon's main cult image, from the city. The veracity of such claims is unclear, as no evidence exists whatsoever of any damage being done to the cities of Babylonia in 484 BC. This is understandable, considering the passage of time. Other forms of retribution are evident from the historical evidence; the text archives of a majority of Babylonia's most prominent families end in 484 BC, suggesting targeted revenge against the supporters of the revolts. Additionally, the Persians appear to have worked on dismantling the religious hegemony Babylon held over Babylonia by encouraging the rise of local cults in other Mesopotamian cities, most notably in Uruk.

These priests, who practised the Babylonian mysteries instead transported themselves farther West where they hoped to be free of Xerxes. They settled on Pergamos as a place to establish their college of priests and took with them the elements of their religion that make them powerful.

“the defeated Chaldeans fled to Asia Minor, and fixed their central college at Pergamos, and took the palladium of Babylon, the cubic stone, with them. Here, independent of state control, they carried on the rites of their religion” (William B. Barker, *Lares and Penates: or, Cilicia and Its Governors*, Ingram, Cooke and Co., London, 1853, pp. 232–233).

NOTE: This is an old source and I will need to find a newer one.



Figure 1: The Pergamon Altar, housed in the Pergamon Museum on Museum Island in Berlin. The Altar was built during the reign of King Eumenes II in the first half of the 2nd century BC on one of the terraces of the acropolis of Pergamon. In 1878, the German engineer Carl Humann started excavating the acropolis and a museum was built for it, opening in 1930. This is the same museum which houses the Ishtar Gate of ancient Babylon.

The Attalid Dynasty ruled an empire from their capital at Pergamon during the 3rd and 2nd century BCE. Fighting for their place in the turbulent world following the death of Alexander the Great, the Attalids briefly flourished with Pergamon becoming a great Hellenistic city famed for its culture, library, and Great Altar. In the year 133 B.C. the young King of Pergamon, Attalus III, died, leaving his territory and his treasure to the city and people of Rome. This included his titled, one of which being the Senior Pontiff of the college of Priests – the Pontifex Maximus.

“when the teachers of the Babylonian mystery religions later moved from Pergamum to Rome, they were influential in paganism Christianity and were the source of many so-called religious rites which have crept into ritualistic churches”

- John Walvoord, chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary (The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Revelation).

As we have already seen, it was the Babylonian influences on the Christian church were extensive and this was certainly Satan’s intention as it leads and led people away from Jesus. The people of Pergamos are congratulated for putting up with and standing up to these influences, but it was a fight they would, ultimately, not be able to win. The fact that Jesus says that this is “[where Satan dwells](#)” indicates that, for the local populace, this is an ongoing matter as one would expect with such a large and impressive temple on the hill in the middle of town.

Other Sources:

<https://www.livius.org/articles/person/bel-simanni-and-samas-eriba/>

<https://www.project6000.com/english-home-page/2000-a-abraham-daniel-and-the-persians/480-133-p-the-babylonian-priests-come-to-pergamon/>

<https://www.vision.org/through-ancient-looking-glass-809>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_revolt_\(484_BC\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_revolt_(484_BC))

Reproof:

The story of Balaam and Balak is found in Numbers 23 and 24. In short, Balak, King of Moab, hired Balaam, a non-Israelite, prophet of YHWH to curse Israel on their invasion of Palestine after the 40 years in the Wilderness. Balaam agreed to only speak what God told him to say, and when the time came, Balaam blessed the Israelites instead of cursing them. Balaam is represented as one of seven gentile prophets in Rabbinic literature, Job being another, but is not considered a positive prophet in Jewish eyes. He is stipulated as being responsible for the Heresy of Peor in Number 31, where he the Midianites used carnal persuasive methods to have their lives spared; the Israelites having been instructed to slaughter them by Moses. God cursed them with a plague and 24,000 were killed. Both the text of Numbers 31 and this verse stipulate that Balak and the other local kings learned how to use sexual interest and other gluttonous pleasures to entice the Children to not slaughter them.

The reproof involved in this verse is that there are some amongst the population of that church that are actively trying to lead people astray – possibly unknowingly. This ‘unknowing’ deviance is reenforced by another reference to the Nicolaitans which, as stated above, taught a combination of separation from the Mosaic law and sexual worship.

Its noteworthy that this is the first reference to ‘fornication’ or ‘sexual impropriety’ recorded in the book of Revelation, and that it is combined with both a historic example and a philosophic concept – the Nicolaitans. In this, specific, example, it can clearly be taken literally but also can be combined with the Nicolaitan heresy as a philosophical statement. To say that these people are sexually immoral, i.e. committing adultery, in this context is that they are making decisions to go against God’s original law. They are going against their Jewish, law-based heritage and actively opposing it.

In other words, through the teachings of the Nicolaitans, they are not only saying that the Law of Moses is accomplished and therefore no longer necessary for one to be part of the Kingdom of God, but that they are actively saying that, because of Jesus’ death, they are free to do literally anything they want. This betrays not only their Jewish heritage, but Jesus’ instructions that, “[if you love Me, keep My commandments.](#)” John 14:15. These commandments were not the Law of Moses, but were closely aligned to those and included a wide variety of practises that the Nicolaitans were engaged in.

The metaphor for such cheating, in this form, is going to be a recurring theme through the Revelation, and something we will see again.

Warning:

Repentance is the encouragement, and fighting with both sides of the sword is the warning. This seems somewhat light, but when one considers what Christ can speak with his mouth – destruction and creation in the same breath – that is a pretty stark warning.

Blessing:

Everlasting life is promised to those who overcome in a couple of different and somewhat cryptic ways for us to read but they would have been very obvious to the Greeks and Romans reading this letter.

Hidden Manna:

Jesus is, of course, the 'bread of life' (John 6:35) but this is described as 'hidden' manna.

White Stone:

White and black stones were used in Greek and Roman society to make decisions when voting. To be given a white stone could mean to be given a place of both authority and responsibility in the Kingdom. This was especially used when deciding guilt and innocence in trials, which is most likely the reference here. The trial before Roman courts would have the person judged as either guilty or innocent depending on if the jury put a white or black stone in the box to decide their fate.

New Name written on it:

Alternatively, White stones were used as tickets of admission for some ancient festivals of a strongly religious nature. These stones would have the names of the respective Gods that were being worshiped written on them, or they could bear the individual's 'spiritual' or 'priestly' name; a name they were referred to when they were doing religious thing. This is emulated in modernity by papal names or regnal names. They would be granted admission only if they had done the proper deeds and rituals to gain access. In this case, the 'new name' is the name of the individual, reborn and freed from sin and corruption; a spiritual rebirth requires a spiritual name.

Broader Church: 313-538AD (The formal establishment of the Papacy and destruction of Arian Heretics)

Although the Edict of Milan saw the end of formal persecution of the Christian population in the Empire, Constantine did not simply make the entire world Christian. His conversion to Christianity is heavily debated amongst scholars as to its authenticity and validity, but his openness and support of Christians is not. By taking on the mantle of championing Christians, Constantine was strongly able to influence them and their direction.

Council of Nicea, 325

To this end, in 325AD he called the Council of Nicea and invited all 1,800 bishops of the Christian church within the Roman Empire to attend. Eusebius of Caesarea counted the actual attendees at more than 250, Eustathius of Antioch estimated "about 270" and Athanasius of Alexandria counted 318 (all three were present at the Council). Athanasius' 318 is the widely accepted number of attendees.

2 main points were the topic of discussion: The date for Easter was fixed and the Arian Heresy was debated.

Arianism was a theological theory that Jesus was not as divine or as Holy as God the Father, and in most versions of the theory was created. This theory is still a part of some groups

today, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses. Arius (256–336) examined Jesus' words and his constant subordination to the Father and developed the theory that Jesus was not as important or not as powerful as the Father. Debate about the divinity of Jesus raged for years with strong implications for both sides.

We have already discussed this theology but can review it later in more depth. The important point for our study is that matters came to a head during the Nicean Council when the Nicean Creed was decided as an attempt to conclude the matter. The council that discussed the different theological perspectives concluded with their theological statement:

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten,

that is, from the substance of the Father,

God from God, light from light, true God from true God,

begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth,

...

But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or created, or is subject to alteration or change - these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes.

- The Nicean Creed

Nevertheless, the matter was not settled. When Constantine died, his son, Constantius, became sole emperor and was a pro-Arian himself. This gave support to the Arian factions amongst Christianity rather than having it fail and become a historic footnote. The next emperor, Julian (331 – 363), was also the last non-Christian Roman Emperor and as a result took little part in theological discussions. Arianism evolved into an equal, if opposite, theological position one could hold, and more or less was respected as such for some time.

It was not until Theodosius (Emperor 379-395) that Arianism was effectively wiped out among the ruling class and elite of the Eastern Empire. In 381, the Second ecumenical council, the Council of Constantinople, assembled and reaffirmed the Nicaean Creed.

First Council of Constantinople, 381

During the intervening period, Arianism had bred a number of other complex doctrine, especially regarding the divinity of the Holy Spirit, which had not been covered at Nicea (there it was simply assumed that the Holy Spirit was divine). Constantinople reinforced the concept that Jesus is God, as well as stipulating that the Holy Sprit is part of the God head and as divine as the other members. This is generally regarded as the end of the dispute both about the Trinity and the end of Arianism among the Roman, non-Germanic peoples.

Arian missionaries, however, had converted many amongst the Germanic tribes to their view, and it was most dominant among the Ostrogoths, Lombards and Vandals. Ulfilas, who became bishop of the Goths in 341 AD, translated the Bible into their own languages so they could understand its contents and most sided strongly with his traditions, including Arianism.

The Ostrogothic Kingdom ruled Rome itself and Italy broadly until 493 and would be overtaken by the Byzantine Empire in about 553. They were mostly tolerant to Christians.

Generally, most Vandal kings, except Hilderic, persecuted Trinitarian Christians to a greater or lesser extent, banning conversion for Vandals, exiling bishops and generally making life difficult for Trinitarians. Catholic bishops were exiled or killed through much of Genseric's (389 - 477) reign, and laymen were excluded from office and frequently suffered confiscation of their property. Genseric did conclude a peace with Constantinople in 476 and from this time it appears Catholics were more widely accepted in society. Its noteworthy that, during 476–477, Bishop Victor of Carthage sent him, during a period of peace, a sharp refutation of Arianism and suffered no punishment.

Huneric, Genseric's successor, issued edicts against Catholics in 483 and 484 in an effort to marginalise them and make Arianism the primary religion in North Africa. The Vandals were on the decline after Genseric's death and in 534 King Gelimer surrendered to his Byzantine conquerors, ending the Kingdom of the Vandals.

The Lombards would take over the Italian peninsula after the Ostrogoths would be expelled, but by that time they had gone through their own period of Arian Heresy and the Papal states – then the Duchy of Rome – were permitted autonomy. This duchy would ultimately form the core of the Papal States, and these 3 nations were the 3 referred to both in Daniel and in later Revelation as the 3 states that were displaced.

Roman Primacy

The Council of Constantinople in 381 also included a more political but still powerful statement:

The Bishop of Constantinople, however, shall have the prerogative of honour after the Bishop of Rome because Constantinople is New Rome.

- The third canon of the Council of Constantinople

Debate over the supremacy of Churches had been debated for years, with Rome and Constantinople both taking precedence over Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria after Constantine became the patron of Christianity. Constantine, being the Roman Emperor, favoured Rome over Constantinople, despite the problems in Italy and Constantinople becoming the centre of the world. For the most part, this was academic but as Arianism and other theological debates raged; especially under the non-Christian Julian and with the possibility of other non-Christian emperors, the question of authority became more and more acute.

To conclude matters, Emperor Justinian I (527–565) formulated the organisation of the Christian church to be governed by the heads (patriarchs) of the five major episcopal 'sees'. This statement formalised the hierarchy amongst what were near equal managers of the Christian Church and established Roman authority to give instruction to other Patriarchs. Justinian decreed this in 533 and it took effect in 538 with the opening of the Third Council of Orléans under Pope Vigilius. Although in effect, the Quinisext Council (held in Constantinople) of 692 gave this model formal recognition and ranked the sees in order of pre-eminence.

The transference of the Babylonian Mysteries from Pergamos to Rome encouraged a great many false doctrines to be absorbed into the Christian Movement. These include, but are not limited to:

- Sunday as Sabbath source
 - Ancient:
 - Sun worship was practically universal
 - Christian:
 - Emperor Constantine decree, March 7, 321
 - Third Council of Orléans, 538
 - Justinian 'The Code' Book III
- https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/CJ3_Scott.htm
- Easter and Christmas source
 - Ancient:
 - Sumerian goddess Inanna, or Ishtar
 - Sumerian Tammuz (also born December 25th)
 - Egyptian Horus (also born December 25th)
 - Egyptian Osiris (also born December 25th)
 - Roman Mithras (also born December 25th)
 - Greek Dionysus (also born December 25th)
 - Phrygian Cybele
 - Christian:
 - Council of Nicaea 325
 - Justinian 'The Code' Book III
- https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/CJ3_Scott.htm
- Christmas
 - Ancient in addition to those above:
 - Roman Saturnalia
 - German Yule log
 - Christian:
 - Introduced in 379 in Antioch by John Chrysostom
 - Augustine of Hippo formalised the 25th of December
- Veneration of Mary
 - Council of Ephesus, 431, formally gave Mary the title of Theotokos (Mother of God)

The population of the Christian movement that held out against the temptation of these viewpoints are few; especially when one considers the psychological advantages they offer.

Local Group:

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write,

Authority Reference:

‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

Commendation:

19 “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

Reproof:

20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Warning:

24 “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.

Blessing:

25 But hold fast what you have till I come.

26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—

27 ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron;

They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’ — as I also have received from My Father;

28 and I will give him the morning star.

29 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

Local Group:

Thyatira, now the modern Turkish city of Akhisar ("white castle"), was originally named Pelopia before Semiramis and finally Thyateira. It was founded in 290 BC by Alexander the Great's general, Seleucus I Nicator while he was at war with Lysimachus.

It was a manufacturing hub and more guilds are known in Thyatira than any other contemporary city in the Roman province of Asia. Inscriptions mention: wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers, and bronze-smiths.

Paul and Silas might have visited Thyateira during Paul's second or third journey, though evidence is entirely circumstantial. They visited several small unnamed towns in the general vicinity during the second journey. While in Philippi, Paul and Silas stayed with a woman named Lydia from Thyateira, who continued to help them even after they were jailed and released.

Considering this, it is reasonable to believe that this church is closely associated with many others in the area owing to the need to move for trade, and that it is highly likely that this was a wealthy church. To that end, the qualities it is commended for; “[love](#), [service](#), [faith](#), [and your patience](#); and [...works](#)” are measures that one would expect from a more poverty-stricken church but, if anything, this shows how much they were able to overcome the temptations of wealth and power.

Authority Reference:

Jesus is referred to by 2 particular qualities;

- The eyes of flame, being the windows to the soul and being able to see through fiction and to get to the heart of what is being examined and
- The feet of Brass offering a combination of strength and stability. Brass is both strong and heavy, and it is difficult to move as well as being a widely used in statues because of its high malleability. Compared to bronze, which can fracture, brass can be worked into a very fine and detailed image, offering a strong and stable but detailed example for this church.

Commendation:

The commendation to this church is quick and sweet. You have done a lot of good works and, as time has passed, your works have only become more and more impressive.

Reproof:

This is one of the strongest reproofs recorded, and a long one!

Warning:

We can interpret this passage in one of two ways. Unfortunately, like all these churches, specific details about this literal church at this time are lacking, but if we accept this as a real woman, this church has obviously been corrupted by a 'prophetess' who is inspiring the church members to highly inappropriate practises. What is interesting about this reference is that Jesus does not include another reference to the Nicolaitans who, as previously examined, practise both sexual immorality and worship of other deities.

Nevertheless, Jesus says that he has given the church there a chance to repent, and this woman has made a choice not to repent. Those who do commit 'adultery' with her obviously produce offspring which Jesus starts to say he will kill as an example to the other Asian churches as an example. Jesus stipulates that he will do this to both reward those who stayed close to his word and punish those who have betrayed his trust.

The issue here is that any widespread death of Children should have been recorded in history and there is no record of that anywhere. That's not to say this wasn't literal, but it is also out of character for Jesus - to meet out such punishment to children. Surely, an event of this type, would have been recorded in Church history; yet it was not. For all the early church records, these events have no, literal, translation.

Spiritual Church

In the Jewish scripture, Jezebel was the daughter of Ithobaal I of Tyre and the wife of Ahab, King of Israel, recorded in 1Kings 16. In that story, Ahab and Jezebel instituted the worship of Baal and Asherah on a national scale. When we consider what is being discussed here, specifically 'adultery', and in the context of the previous church, we can see how all this language can refer to spiritual adultery rather than romantic adultery.

By the time this letter is addressed to the Church, 'Jezebel' has already been a part of the church. The language used is present tense; “because you **allow** that woman Jezebel, who **calls** herself a prophetess, to **teach** and **seduce** My servants to **commit** sexual immorality and **eat** things sacrificed to idols.” These words are all present words, things ongoing, meaning this ‘Jezebel’ is a present individual.

Jesus add that he has already given her a period of probation to change her ways. “**21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.**” This character is, therefore, set in her ways. He then stipulates that he will “**cast her into a sickbed**” which strangely permits those who wish to continue to commit adultery with her, but even her, salvation is extended to all those who “**repent of their deeds.**” This spiritual adultery will bear fruit, and Jesus is unequivocal when he says he will “**kill her children with death**” but again, Jesus promises only those who are against him entirely will be punished, stipulating that, with his eyes of fire, “**I am He who searches the minds and hearts**”, a warning and promise that is to be translated to “**all the churches**”. Jesus then reenforces this extension of both salvation and punishment – this warning and promise – by explaining that He “**will give to each one of you according to your works.**”

When we evaluate this language from a spiritual context – especially in the light of the previous Church’s message, we can see that some new theologies have been introduced to

this Church, seduced by attractive benefits. Those are attractive and involve practices clearly that have been rejected by the Jewish heritage of the Christian movement. Both these are clearly counter to Mosaic Law and time has been extended to this group to repent of their sins.

If we view that in this way, we can start to setup some rules for interpreting later symbols.

- A woman must relate to a theology or movement
- Sexual immorality must relate to betraying God's word
- Children must relate to the movements that result from that false set of teachings

We will discuss how these symbols apply when looking at the broader Church.

Blessing:

Those who do not engage with Jezebel are encouraged, like the previous churches, to stick to their truth until Jesus returns, but more is promised here than eternal salvation. Those who hold true to God's word are promised power and those who do engage with her are promised to be shattered and scattered like broken pottery. Furthermore, the 'morning star' is promised to those who overcome. Jesus identifies himself as this morning star in Revelation 22:16 "[I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.](#)" Those who overcome during this time are promised Salvation, the witnessing of their opponents being scattered and destroyed and communion with Jesus himself.

That's a strong blessing.

Broader Church: the Universal Church, 538 – 1536 (The council of Trent)

The explanation we have just made of the Pergamos Church clearly show that, at the time this Church steps into the story, there has already been a lot of inappropriate theological dealings amongst the faithful. Clearly, Jezebel is well established in the wider church, and there is a lot of adultery and eating of idol-sacrificed food.

Justinian's reign between 527 and 565 represented the furthest extent the Byzantine phase of the Roman empire ever had. Shortly after his death Muhammad was born in 570 and would write the Quran between 610 and 632, and his movement, Islam, would be heavily interact with the Byzantine Empire. In 602, the Byzantine–Sasanian War started that would rage for 26 years and, while the Byzantine empire would hold its defensive line, the drain this placed on that society would start its decline. For the Sassanid Empire (Persia, modern Iran and Iraq) this would fracture their society allowing for a Muslim invasion and eventual overtake.

Because of this the Roman Church, which had always seen itself as above Kings even if it had taken guidance from Emperors, instead moved more completely into the spiritual sphere. Starting with King Clovis I in 508, the Church began to spread itself out amongst the wider populations of the world.

This freedom did not, at all, restrict the Church's desire to hold back on adding or evolving theological, if anything it empowered it. The threat that came from the quickly rising Islamic forces made the Church look to other martial powers and encouraged it to establish itself as a dominating force. To this end, the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire by anointing Constantine in 800 formalised their overlordship of all Christian kings and gave them a formal power structure to match. The Roman Church was clearly going nowhere, and it would not be until the Reformation and the Council of Trent in 1536 when serious threats would be made to the existence of the Catholic Church, despite the actions of its leaders.

In fact, by 6th Century, the Church now existed outside of politics in a lot of places. France, Germany, Britain and Ireland, for example, were being converted in such isolation that the Roman Leaders could not hope to exert any serious authority over their Christian worshippers.

This is important as, while instructions could not easily be spread through the Christian world, theology most certainly could. This was the time when Catholic theology saw the majority of its formalisation, resulting in the writing of Summa Theologica by Thomas Aquinas which despite being in excess of 4100 pages was still incomplete by his death in 1274. Formally published in 1485, this massive tome is still required reading for Catholic seminary today for those wishing to become priests.

At its core, Roman Catholic Theology relies on 7 Sacraments that it claims overlordship and administration of. The current seven sacraments were set out by Peter Lombard and confirmed by the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1213. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, a modern version of Summa Theologica developed by Pope John Paul II in 1992, lists the sacraments as follows: "The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments. There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony."

The list of seven sacraments were formalised by the Council of Florence (1439) and reaffirmed by the Council of Trent (1545–1563), which stated:

CANON I.- If any one saith, that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord; or that they are more, or less, than seven, to wit, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Order, and Matrimony; or even that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament; let him be anathema.

CANON IV.- If any one saith, that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation, but superfluous; and that, without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain of God, through faith alone, the grace of justification; – though all (the sacraments) are not necessary for every individual; let him be anathema.

Note: An 'anathema' is a formal curse by a pope or a council of the Church, excommunicating a person or denouncing a doctrine.

All Theological teachings builds on these sacraments and included amongst those teachings are the following, and there are many others that could be discussed but as I'm at 24 pages here already, I figured these would do for this chapter.

Transubstantiation of the Eucharist:

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that in the Eucharistic offering bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. The affirmation of this doctrine was expressed, using the word "transubstantiate", by the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215. It was later challenged by various 14th-century reformers, John Wycliffe in particular.

Absolution/Confession/ Penance:

Since the 3rd Century, a form of confession existed amongst believers. This was a combination of public profession of guilt if the group was the victim, and a private confession to a spiritual guide as a form of finding reconciliation with God. When the Roman Church united with the state, bishops became judges and the theology of penance as a part of salvation started to develop.

It wasn't until the 4th Lateran Council in 1215 that the rule was formalised named "Omnis utriusque sexus". Still in force, it commands every Christian who has reached the years of discretion to confess all his or her sins at least once a year to their priest. This canon did no more than confirm earlier legislation and custom, however, this was the first time that it took the shape of the Catholic confessional as it is known today and was the first time to formalise a priest as confessor.

This removes Jesus as the point of confession and establishes the priest as arbitrator of forgiveness and absolution.

Indulgences:

An indulgence is defined as "a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins" according to Edward Peters 2008 book 'A Modern Guide to Indulgences'. The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes an indulgence as "a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins **whose guilt has already been forgiven**, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and all of the saints".

For the most part, in modernity, these are good works that one does to 'earn' time off punishment for doing bad things that, although you are forgiven for them, you still need to be punished.

Historically, however, these have taken a wide variety of forms when connected to penance and other deeds such as pilgrimages. The two best known forms of indulgences are the Crusades, where the slaughter of Muslims was seen as a penance on the same basis of prayer, and the sold certificates, heavily marketed by Johann Tetzel, to pay for the rebuild of St Peters Basilica in Rome in the early 16th Century. Tetzel's mission was to raise as much money as possible to fund the restoration, and he is widely remembered for his couplet:

As soon as the gold in the casket rings

The rescued soul to heaven springs

Tetzel went far beyond his remit, promising actual salvation for the purchase of indulgences, for which he was soundly condemned in time. Luther began to preach openly against him and was inspired to write his famous Ninety-five Theses in part due to Tetzel's actions, in which he states:

27. They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory.

28. It is certain that when money clinks in the money chest, greed and avarice can be increased; but when the church intercedes, the result is in the hands of God alone.

Luther also claimed that Tetzel had received a substantial amount of money at Leipzig, from a nobleman asking him for a letter of indulgence for a future sin. Supposedly Tetzel answered in the affirmative, insisting that the payment had to be made at once. The nobleman did so and received a letter and seal from Tetzel. When Tetzel left Leipzig the nobleman attacked him along the way, and gave him a thorough beating, sending him back empty-handed to Leipzig, with the comment that it was the future sin which he had in mind. Duke George at first was quite furious about the incident, but when he heard the whole story, he let it go without punishing the nobleman. Without Tetzel's overindulgence in indulgences, it's possible the reformation would have never happened, and this does serve as the height of the Roman Church's arrogance when it comes to salvation.

To be clear here, Indulgences do not offer Salvation. Catholic teaching is that Salvation comes from Jesus alone, but that sins need to be punished by time in Purgatory. That time can be reduced through indulgences.

Papal Dominance and the supreme Authority of the Roman Church

As a result of the East-West Schism of 1054, the doctrine that the Roman Church is the absolute and sole mechanism to salvation evolved leading to the 1215 Fourth Lateran Council declaring that: "There is one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which there is absolutely no salvation", a statement of what is known as the doctrine of extra Ecclesiam nulla salus.

This doctrine was expanded upon in more modern times leading up to and during the 2nd Vatican Council.

In the encyclical *Mortalium animos* of 6 January 1928, Pope Pius XI wrote that "in this one Church of Christ no man can be or remain who does not accept, recognize and obey the authority and supremacy of Peter and his legitimate successors" and quoted the statement of Lactantius: "The Catholic Church is alone in keeping the true worship. This is the fount of truth, this the house of Faith, this the temple of God: if any man enter not here, or if any man go forth from it, he is a stranger to the hope of life and salvation."

The Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965 declared: "Whosoever, [...] knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved." In the same document, the Council continued: "The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter."

In a decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, The Second Vatican Council also stated: "Catholics must gladly acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren. It is right and salutary to recognise the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood. For God is always wonderful in His works and worthy of all praise."

The conclusion of the warning Jesus writes to the church of this time includes a clear statement that repentance is an option. This is also the time when the Church splits due to political and theological differences, and when groups like the Waldenses were preaching their opposition to Rome. The 'children' of this Church would, naturally, be the groups and movements that broke away from, but still held the same primary belief structure as, the Roman Church. These groups will become more and more apparent as we discuss the Church's development but includes both the Schismatic Churches and the Apostate Protestant Churches. It would be easy to say that any church that preaches and teaches practises contrary to Scripture – both Old and New Testament – is included in this, condemned group.

To be clear here, this does include some teachers, although not the formal dogma, of the Adventist Church, such as the 'Concerned Brethren' or anti-trinitarians. Jesus' stipulation that he will "[kill her children with death](#)" would also include those who are not formally associated with any organised group, as Jesus claims "[I am He who searches the minds and hearts.](#)" Although the history of the world is written in organisations and Churches, Jesus cares little for such things, and judges the individual on their acceptance and rejection of his sacrifice. Jesus is here, clearly, stating that he will take into consideration both what the intellectual conviction and the heartfelt belief of the individual is, and that will be what he will examine in the final judgment, not membership of a particular group.

At the risk of being salacious, we can add a comment about the personal sexual deviances of the Popes during this time too, but for the most part that is better left unsaid.