

*The un-biblical
Doctrines of
Roman Catholicism*

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INTRODUCTION

One of the characteristics of Roman Catholicism, and this would apply to many of the other religious organizations around today, is a strong desire to keep the sheep within *their* fold, and for personal interests. A common way of accomplishing this goal is to create a legalistic religious environment in which members develop a strong fear of questioning the status quo.

Down through the centuries the Roman Catholic Church has developed finely-tuned skills to do just that. Its unbiblical doctrines and practices continually reinforce the belief that their church is indispensable for having a right relationship with God, so that to leave is made to appear like rejecting God.

Many of its popes declared that there is no salvation apart from the pope and from Catholicism, and that no one can interpret or understand the Bible apart from Catholic teaching and tradition. As we shall demonstrate below, throughout history, the Roman Catholic Church has been one of those religious organizations that has misinterpreted and misrepresented Scripture the most; adding things that are not there and leaving out things that are.

Before doing this, however, I would like to correct any misunderstanding between the meaning of the term *Catholic Church* and the *Roman Catholic Church*. The word *catholic* simply means *common* or *universal*.

The Church of Jesus Christ, of which He and He alone is the Head (see *Ephesians 1:22, 4:15, 5:23; Colossians 1:18, 2:19*), is truly catholic in that it comprises all those, and only those, who in every place and period of time have been united to Him through the New Birth and a common faith (see *Titus 1:4; 2 Peter 1:1*), and because it embraces the Gospel as perceived and proclaimed by the twelve

Apostles (*Acts 2:42-43*). This is why in the Nicene Creed we say we believe in “One Catholic and Apostolic Church.”

A Roman Catholic, on the other hand, is a person who believes that the Roman Catholic Church was instituted by the Lord Jesus, and who accepts the authoritative teaching of that church as defined and expressed by its popes, bishops and councils.

THE MASS

Our first example of Rome's unbiblical practices is the denial that through His "*once for all*," NEVER TO BE REPEATED, **sacrifice** at Calvary, Jesus redeemed those who believe on Him. This is the central message of the Christian faith and a repeated theme throughout the whole New Testament, especially in the Letter to the Hebrews (see *Hebrews 7:27, 9:12, 26, 28, 10:10, 12, 14*). The Council of Trent says:

The sacrifice (in the Mass) is identical with the sacrifice of the cross inasmuch as Jesus Christ is both priest and victim. The only difference lies in the manner of offering which is bloody upon the cross and bloodless on our altars. If anyone saith that in the Mass a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God let him be anathema.

This was reaffirmed at the Second Vatican Council which stated:

The Mass, the Lord's Supper, is ... a sacrifice in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetrated. As often as the sacrifice of the cross, by which Christ our Passover is sacrificed, is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on.

It is very clear from these statements that the Mass is a *sacrifice*, although a bloodless one; and that the "bloodless sacrifice of the Mass" is expiatory for sins; the means by which sins are atoned for and forgiven. In addition to this erroneous teaching, it is claimed that only its ordained priests have the power to transform the bread

and wine into the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is known as Transubstantiation.

In the Question and Answer Catholic Catechism the following questions are asked and the following answers are given: (Q) What is the sacrament of the Eucharist? (A) The Eucharist is a sacrament which really, truly, and substantially contains the body and blood, soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.

(Q) How does Christ become present in the Eucharist? (A) Christ becomes present in the Eucharist by means of Transubstantiation. Transubstantiation is the term used to identify the change that takes place at the consecration.

One only needs to read the Bible to see such teaching is completely unbiblical and an offense to Christ's death on the Cross. The Word of God makes it abundantly clear that, "*Without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sin*" (*Hebrews 9:22*). How then can a sacrifice which is bloodless achieve pardon for sins?

In the Gospel of John we learn that while Jesus was dying on the Cross, He cried out, "*It is finished,*" and then gave up the spirit (*John 20:30*). By this He meant that the work of redemption was finished and there was no further offering that needed to be made.

The True Meaning of Communion

Communion, or the Lord's Supper, is the *remembrance* of the Lord's one-time sacrifice for sin. Jesus made it very clear, as He administered the first communion with His disciples, that the purpose of it all was to be a constant reminder of what He was about to do for them, and for all believers, through His death (*Luke 22:19*). The real and sole power of communion is the power of remembrance.

As the disciples (and we) ate the broken bread, they were to think of Jesus' body that was broken for them, and as they drank the wine, they were to remember how Jesus' precious blood was shed for them (*Mark 14:22-25*). To invest these details and elements with a significance never intended by our Lord is to miss the majestic simplicity and true meaning of communion.

In *John 6:53-54* Jesus did speak of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, but He used these words symbolically, as He did many other times in Scripture. In the same Gospel of John, Jesus said He was the door of the sheep, and, elsewhere, that He was the true vine. Further on in Chapter six of the Gospel of John our Lord said: "*The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life,*" meaning that they were to be interpreted in a spiritual sense.

For believers, communion is a reminder to us of the substitutionary work of Christ for our sin, and it is also a profession on our part that we have become partakers of Christ and draw our life, our spiritual food, from the truths of His death and resurrection.

This second purpose is the reason why the Apostle Paul said that eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner could bring damnation. A person who takes communion without being cleansed by the blood of Jesus is professing a lie.

THE PAPACY

The Roman Catholic Church claims the pope to be infallible. He is called holy father, your holiness and vicar of Christ. Such a statement is in complete contrast to the plain teaching of the Word of God. It is based on a misinterpretation of Jesus' words to Peter: "*And I tell you that you are Peter (meaning piece of a rock), and on this rock I will build my church*" (Matthew 16:18); a statement the Lord made to all His disciples on other occasions (see Matthew 18:18-19; John 20:23-24).

Papal infallibility also contradicts the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church itself prior to 1870. The Council of Constance (1414) declared that, "Every lawfully convoked council representing the Church derives its authority immediately from Christ, and every one, the pope included, is subject to it in matters of faith." And let us not forget the warning that Jesus gave His Apostles concerning such an office as pope:

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth father, for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called teacher, for you have one teacher, the Christ.

(Matthew 23:8-11)

After the time of Emperor Constantine the Church at Rome became Roman in its organization and approach and began to embrace many of its pagan religious ceremonies and beliefs. One of the most prominent cults it embraced was the worship of the Mithras, which was probably the greatest competitor to Christianity during the development of the early Church.

Interestingly, worshippers of the Mithras, believed by the Romans to be a mediator between the sun god and humanity, followed a leader called *Papa* (pope), who ruled from the Vatican Hill in ancient Rome.

DENIAL OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

While the Roman Catholic Church professes to accept the Bible as the Holy Word of God, it does not believe the Bible ALONE contains ALL that we need to know with regard to what we believe and how to live and serve God as true Christians. It claims that the Bible together with the “sacred traditions” of that church are necessary and of equal authority, because they are both the Word of God. The Council of Trent:

The Church receives and venerates with equal feeling of piety and reverence all the books of the Old and New Testament – and also the traditions relating as well to faith and morals as having either from the mouth of Christ Himself or from the dictation of the Holy Ghost been preserved by continuous succession in the Catholic Church.

The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed this:

The Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone. Hence, both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal feelings of devotion and reverence.

What incredible statements! This is their teaching in spite of the fact that many of the early Fathers held to what has been the position of the Christian faith since the time of the Apostles; that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are not only divinely inspired; they comprise the ONLY authoritative rule of faith and practice. It is true that the Apostle John says:

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

(John 21:25)

However, John also says:

Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

(John 20:30)

The Scriptures do not contain *all* that Christ and His Apostles taught and did, but that which is contained therein is both sufficient and “*able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*” (2Timothy 3:15). For “*the secret things belong the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and our children forever*” (Deuteronomy 29:29).

The early Church Father Justin Martyn said: “We are enjoined by Christ Himself to put no faith in human doctrines, but in those declared by the blessed prophets and taught by himself.”

In line with this Basil the Great insisted: “It is a manifest falling away from faith and a mark of presumption, either to omit anything in Scripture or to introduce anything not in Scripture.” Chrysostom too: “There is no way of knowing what is the true Church of Christ save by Scripture.”

And Irenaeus encouraged those of his time: “Read diligently the Gospels given unto us by the apostles, and read diligently the prophets, and ye shall find every action and the whole doctrine preached there.”

Jerome aptly taught: “As we deny not those things that are written, so we refuse those things which are not written.” Finally, I call to

mind what our Lord Jesus said to the religious leaders of his day who made this very mistake of equating Scripture with tradition:

And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?... So, for the sake of your tradition you make void the word of God. You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you: "This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. In vain do they worship me; teaching human precepts as doctrines.

(Matthew 15:3, 6-10)

Jesus condemned the religious leaders of His day because they not only taught things which were not in Scripture, but also things that were completely contrary. By doing this they had set aside the commandment of God, and declared null and void that which He had expressly decreed.

There is a severe warning in Scripture for anyone who adds or takes away from God's Word (see *Proverbs 30:6; Deuteronomy 4:2; 2 John 9; Revelation 22:18*).

True Apostolic Tradition

When the Apostles spoke of tradition in the New Testament, they were speaking of the authoritative teachings they had taught "*whether by word of mouth or by letter.*" The Apostle Paul encouraged the believers at Thessalonians to "*Stand firm and hold to the traditions we passed on to you*" (2 *Thessalonians 2:15*).

Again, in his First Letter to the Corinthians Paul wrote to the believers: "*I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions, just as I passed them on to you*" (1 *Corinthians 11:2*). The Apostle is saying here to the believers that

he commended them for keeping his instructions, just as he had delivered them to the Church.

In order to merit any consideration religious traditions must meet with certain criteria. One, they must comply with the clear teaching of Scripture, and not be at variance. Two, they must not take precedence over the clear teaching and commandments in Scripture. Most, if not all, of what the Roman Catholic Church holds to be “God-made traditions” does not meet with this criteria and are to be rejected as human precepts and the commandments of men.

TWISTING SCRIPTURE

Roman Catholics are not at liberty to interpret the Bible in order to discover its true meaning. This right is said to belong solely to their church hierarchy, as decreed at the Council of Trent and reiterated by the Second Vatican Council.

This implies that when it comes to a correct understanding of what the Bible says, we should not trust our own judgement, in case we err, but should come to the conclusion, trusting in our own judgement of course, that their understanding is correct.

Believers are also required to filter out what they read in the Bible through the lenses of Catholic doctrines. For example, the Bible plainly speaks of Mary having sexual relations with her husband Joseph after the birth of her first Son, Jesus Christ (*Matthew 1:25*), and that Jesus had many brothers and sisters (*Matthew 12:46-50, 13:55-57; Mark 6:3-4; John 7:5*).

In spite of this scriptural evidence, Catholics must read these passages without ever questioning the doctrine that Mary remained always a virgin. Can you see the absurdity? The New Testament writers constantly urge believers to use their own judgement and reason to discover the truth: “*Test everything, hold fast to that which is good...*” (*1Thessalonians 5:21*). “*Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind*” (*Romans 14:5-6*). “*I speak to sensible people: judge for yourselves what I say*” (*1Corinthians 10:14*).

Despite the unrelenting efforts of the pagan Roman emperors to destroy every copy of the Bible during the first three centuries after Christ, Christianity became the official state religion of the Roman Empire following the conversion of Emperor Constantine in A.D. 325.

However, centuries later the medieval Roman Church fell into apostasy, rejected biblical truth and made political alliances with the kings of Europe. For many centuries they kept the Bible in the

Latin language, which most people could not understand, and issued laws that made possession of a Bible illegal for any Christian layman. During the centuries of the Inquisitions in Europe, there were appalling penalties, including burning at the stake, for anyone who tried to translate the Bible into the common language, or for anyone found to possess a copy in their homes.

Consequently, most people were unable to compare the false doctrines that were widespread in the medieval Roman Church against the doctrines in the Word of God. Not until the Reformation in 1520 A.D. did the light of the Gospel of Christ come to the European population through the translation and printing of the Bible in contemporary languages.

In opposition to the Roman Catholic position, that their church councils, tradition and papal decrees could supersede the teaching of Scripture, the spiritual cry of the Protestant Reformers was *Sola Scriptura* – Scripture alone! Let it also be yours.

ELEVATING MARY

In the Roman Catholic Church Mary the mother of Jesus is elevated to a position which has no basis at all in the New Testament. She has been given the title *Mother of God* (*Catechism, Article 167*) and *Queen of Heaven* (*Article 168A*). *Article 117* says: “All mankind has contracted the guilt and stain of original sin, except the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son.”

Again, “As no man goes to the Father except by the Son, so no man goes to the Son except by His Mother.” Here Mary is extolled to having an important part to play in our salvation.

There are also statues of Mary and the saints that are treated like pagan idols. These statues are frequently carried through city streets in processions, many of which are quite large. In October 1999, a procession of two and a half million Catholics followed a statue of the Virgin of Zapopan.

In December 2001, more than eight million Catholics came to Mexico City to honour Our Lady of Guadalupe, including huge processions following a painting of the “apparition.” In Fatima, Portugal, it is a tradition to have candle-light processions in honour of Our Lady of Fatima. Crowds of pilgrims carrying lighted candles follow a statue, often consisting of thousands of people.

Apparitions of Mary have also appeared in various areas around the world. These supernatural apparitions of “Mary” encourage people to pray the rosary, wear scapulars and claim that the rosary and the immaculate heart of Mary are going to save the world and get people to heaven.

Sometimes Mary appears with “baby Jesus” in her arms. The Infant of Prague is a statue of Jesus Christ as a baby. It is held in a church in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Miracles are attributed to it and pilgrims come from all over the world to venerate it.

Jesus is no longer a baby. He was a grown Man when He was crucified, resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven. Jesus was also a grown Man in resurrected glory when Stephen saw Him standing at the right hand of God in heaven (see *Acts 7:56*).

The message given in these apparitions and moving statues are a deception which will not get people to heaven or a place of safety, neither will they prevent the “approaching holocaust” because the peace of the world has not been entrusted to Mary. Jesus alone holds the keys to heaven (*Revelation 3:7*).

There have also been campaigns to have Mary officially proclaimed a mediatrix, co-mediator with Jesus between God and humanity, even a fourth member of the Trinity. Catholics already address prayers to Mary as a mediator in the Hail Mary prayer. The Lord Jesus is the only Mediator between God and mankind and He alone is our great High Priest, who intercedes to the Father on our behalf (see *1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34*).

Mary is by no means the mother of God, neither was she immaculately conceived, nor assumed into heaven. She was saved as you and I are saved; through her faith in the work of the Cross. In her prayer recorded in the Gospel of Luke she says:

My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me.

(Luke 1:46-50)

Mary was highly favoured by God in quite an exceptional way and was truly *blessed* among women. She conceived supernaturally by the Holy Spirit to bring forth the Messiah by the Virgin Birth. But apart from being the vehicle through whom God was manifest in the flesh, she had nothing whatsoever to do with Christ’s work of salvation.

Jesus did not elevate Mary above others. On the contrary, in the Gospel of Matthew Jesus says: “*I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist*” (*Matthew 11:11*). This statement indicates that not even Mary was greater than he. Jesus also publicly corrected His mother on a number of occasions (see *Matthew 12:46-50; Luke 2:48-50; John 2:4*).

The elevation of Mary to the role given her by the Roman Catholic Church shows a close connection to the ancient Babylonian mystery cults. These had a goddess mother figure known as the Queen of Heaven, which in reality was a pernicious demonic spirit designed to lead people away from the true God to the worship of devils (see *Jeremiah 7:16-19*).

OFFERING PAGAN PRAYERS

Catholic Masses consist mainly of standard written prayers and responses that are repeated at every Mass, although there is some variety due to Scripture readings. Catholics are taught to revere and pray not only to Mary, but to a special group of people called “saints.”

Nowhere in the Bible can we find reference to a special class of holy people who are called saints and to whom we are to pray on behalf of the living; the Bible actually forbids such practices (see *Isaiah 8:19*). Every person who has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is a saint, which means sanctified, set apart (please see Table A for biblical references related to this subject).

Only God has the authority to judge people and declare them righteous. He does not have special favourites, but listens to the prayers of everyone who has received His Son Jesus into their hearts. To elevate a group of Christians above other Christians is a form of idolatry and an affront to the Gospel.

The Rosary is a series of repeated prayers with ten “Hail Marys” for every “Our Father.” Although some pray the Rosary slowly and thoughtfully, others say the prayers rapidly and automatically, to the extent that the words are often indistinguishable. Jesus told us that when we pray, we are not to keep on babbling like pagans, who think they will be heard because of their many words. In the Gospel of Matthew He teaches us how and to whom we are to pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

(Matthew 6:9-14)

This prayer, which is commonly called the Lord's Prayer, is more accurately called the Model Prayer. It was given as a model of what prayer to the Father should consist of.

However, the Roman Catholic Church adopted the reciting of this prayer and made it into nothing more than custom and the vain repetition spoken of above.

Biblical prayer is not based on special words or objects; it is based on our faith in the grace of God and our special relationship with Him through the merit of His Son. It should be a natural form of communication like when talking to a close friend. The Apostle Peter tells us to, "*Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you*" (1Peter 5:7).

The Psalms show how David poured out his heart to God and in the Prophets we see much evidence of this. The New Testament gives us many other examples of how we are to pray to God (see *Ephesians 3:14-19; Colossians 1:9-12; Acts 4:20*).

INSISTING SALVATION BY WORKS

The central message of the Gospel is that salvation cannot be earned through human effort and good deeds, but is a free gift from God through faith in His Son:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

(Ephesians 2:8-10)

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.”

(Galatians 3:10-12)

God is able to do this through the righteousness of His Son being *imputed* to the believer the moment he acknowledges his need of a Saviour and repents of his sin. When the Bible speaks of imputation, it means that which God charges or lays to the account of someone which originally belonged to another, namely Christ. Paul wrote:

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

(2 Corinthians 5:21)

Because the Father treated His precious Son as if He had sinned our sin, He is now able to treat true believers as if they had never sinned, by laying to their account the righteousness of Christ:

He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. In order that, as it is written, “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

(1Corinthians 1:30)

However, this doctrine may seem to contradict other passages of Scripture which speak on the same subject. For example, James appears to say that salvation is based on human works:

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

(James 2:14-18)

But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.

(James 2:18-19)

This difficulty in the Bible is more apparent than real. The Apostle Paul glorified in the universal offer of salvation through faith, because it was a message of power to save the worst and most unworthy of men and women, regardless of who they were, or what they had been or done before coming to repentance.

But when it came to the question of *how* that salvation could be appropriated, the Apostle was unchangeable in his insistence that salvation is a gift of God’s grace ((please see Table B for more biblical references). That being the case, the biblical references which link salvation to *good works*, or *works of the law*, should not

be interpreted in such a way that puts this fundamental doctrine in dispute.

Yet faith in Christ is not merely something external; it means being united to Him in such a way that our whole life is bound up in His (please see Table C). As a result of this union, there should inevitably be some moral change in our life and character.

We cannot claim to be Christians walking in faith without having something of the righteous nature of our precious Saviour being manifest in the way we live and behave. Our actions are an indication of our inner faith says James above, and can be used to determine where we stand with the Lord; or if we stand with Him at all!

So, as you can see, James and Paul do not disagree in their teaching on salvation; they approach the same subject from different perspectives. Paul plainly emphasized that justification is by faith alone and James agrees with him, but puts emphasis on the fact that genuine faith in the Lord should produce actions.

Paul actually says the same thing in many of his writings. Immediately after telling us in his Letter to the Ephesians that we are saved by faith not works, he goes on to say we were, “*Created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life*” (Ephesians 2:10).

However, these “*good works*” are “*works of faith,*” the direct fruits of being united with the Lord through the Holy Spirit. They do not represent any virtuous human attainments that could become the basis for our salvation, but are offered to God in gratitude for all He has already done for us in Christ Jesus (see *1 Thessalonians 1:3*; *2 Thessalonians 1:11*).

God designed our salvation in this way so as to totally eliminate any boasting, bragging or pride from man about his holiness or spiritual accomplishments, and so that all the praise and glory

would go to Him alone, because He alone is worthy (see *Luke 18:9-15*; *Romans 3:27*; *1Corinthians 1:31*; *Ephesians 2:9*).

As far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, it is not enough to trust in the saving merits of Jesus Christ alone; you must do much more than that. For a start you must be baptized. Then you must engage in good works in order to procure your salvation. According to the Council of Trent:

If anyone saith that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sin for Christ's sake alone; or that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified, let him be anathema.

If anyone saith that the good works of one that is justified... does not truly merit increase of grace, eternal life and the attainment of that eternal life... let him be anathema.

As we can see from these statements, salvation is not a free gift but it has to be earned, indeed won, as reiterated by the Second Vatican Council:

From the most ancient times in the Church, good works were also offered to God for the salvation of the sinner... because they are necessary or at least better and more efficacious helps in the task of winning salvation.

PURGATORY AND INDULGENCES

In Catholicism, even devout Christians have to suffer for a time in Purgatory, the place where their souls are confined for a period after death to be purified. Apparently, when God forgives sins, He may still require that the sinner pay for his or her sins by suffering either here on Earth or in Purgatory. The degree of this suffering is proportional to the degree of sinfulness.

This too is completely contrary to the central message of the Gospel proclaimed by the Apostles and believed by the New Testament Church. It is abundantly clear that the moment a sinner turns to Christ in true repentance and faith, his past sins are not only forgiven; the punishment which those sins rightly deserved is completely remitted. Jesus said:

Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned: he has crossed over from death to life.

(John 5:24-25)

The Apostle Paul encouraged believers with these words: *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1)*. The New Testament also makes it clear that at the moment of death a believer in Christ immediately enters into the presence of God.

Paul confessed: *“We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord ” (2 Corinthians 5:8); “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain ” (Philippians 1:21)*.

The penitent thief crucified beside Jesus received this assurance from the Lord: *“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42)*. To go immediately into the presence of

Christ after death is the reward of every true believer, no matter how bad you were before coming to faith in Him.

During the Middle Ages the popes said that they could get people out of Purgatory and into heaven by means of purchasing indulgences. This assignment was given to the priests who spoke of the horrible torments of Purgatory, but told the people that if they purchased an indulgence for their deceased, then their soul would immediately escape into heaven.

People were also told that if they bought an indulgence for themselves, it guaranteed their forgiveness, including the sins committed after the purchase of the indulgence. This encouraged wild living without fear of the spiritual consequences.

In modern times, earning indulgences is done primarily through special prayers and religious practices which are indulgenced. The suffering of the souls in Purgatory can be reduced by means of good works done here on Earth on their behalf. This includes having masses on their behalf, and it is traditional even today to give money to the priest who says the mass on behalf of the dead.

DENYING JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY

The New Testament affirms “*There is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus*” (1 Timothy 2:5). To this I would like to add one further observation: Jesus is not the only way TO salvation, He is also the only way OF salvation. The Apostle Peter made this clear when he said:

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

(Acts 4:12-13)

According to the Second Vatican Council, however:

This sacred Synod... basing itself upon sacred Scripture and tradition, teaches that the Church... is necessary for salvation... It is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.

Again, in the Question and Answer Catholic Catechism the following question is asked and the following answer given: (Q) Is the Church necessary for salvation? (A) Yes, the Church is necessary for salvation. Christ Himself declared that no one can be saved except through faith and baptism. He thereby affirmed the necessity of the Church... into which a person enters as through a door, in the sacrament of baptism.

In light of this teaching, it should come as no surprise that most Roman Catholics question the need to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. After all, where they not Born Again,

cleansed of their sins and incorporated into Christ the moment they were baptized?

The New Testament writers make it very clear that we have to first RECEIVE Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour in order to become *children of God* and *partakers of the divine nature*. For example, when Paul was once asked what one must do to be saved, he gave this simple reply: “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...*” (Acts 16:30). In response to a similar question the Apostle Peter replied: “*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*” (Acts 2:21).

A believer should then be baptized, not in order to make him a believer or receive salvation, but because he has already been made a believer and incorporated into the body of Christ, through his repentance from sin and acceptance of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on his behalf (see Acts 8:12-14, 36-40, 16:14, 18:8; Mark 16:16). His baptism is an outward expression of an inward reality (Romans 6:3-5).

AN UNBIBLICAL PRIESTHOOD

The Church of which Jesus Christ is the Head knows absolutely nothing of the office of the priest as distinct from the laity. On the contrary, the Apostles taught that all true believers have been made priests to minister unto God (*Revelation 1:6, 5:10, 20:6*). They comprise a “*holy priesthood*,” one of whose functions is to offer “*spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*” (*1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 13:15*).

True believers also have boldness to enter the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus (*Hebrews 10:19*); they have direct access to His presence and are able to approach the throne of grace with confidence, “*So that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need*” (*Hebrews 4:16*). “*For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit*” (*Ephesians 2:18, 3:12; Romans 5:2*). Direct and immediate access to God without the help of any “intermediaries,” my friends.

In the Old Testament era only those who belonged to Levi were appointed by God to be priests. However, all this was to change with the coming of Christ and the New Covenant, and the inception of the New Testament Church. Then the office of the priesthood was to disappear, for a better hope was introduced, “*By which we draw near to God*” (*Hebrews 7:18*).

This also explains why the office of priest is not listed anywhere among the offices which Christ gave to His Church, namely Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers (*Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28*). The Roman Catholic Church totally denies this biblical teaching and makes a clear distinction between the priest and the laity. The priest, it affirms, is a class apart and wholly indispensable. The Council of Trent declared:

The priest is the minister of God... It is clear that their function is such that none greater can be conceived... he that despiseth the priest despiseth God; he that hears him hears God.

If any one saith that there is not in the New Testament a visible and external priesthood; or that there is not any power – of forgiving and retaining sins – let him be anathema.

The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the belief that by carrying out sacred functions, their priests act as Christ's ministers: "By Baptism priests introduce men into the People of God; by the sacrament of Penance they reconcile sinners with God and the Church." They also teach: "It is necessary by divine law to confess to a priest each and every mortal sin."

As we stated previously, it also teaches that if its priests say the correct words and perform the correct ritual actions then the bread and wine will literally turn into the body, blood soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. This is both magic and idolatry. The Eucharist is an idol made by human hands and human words, and when Catholics worship it, their love and adoration goes to the elements instead of going to Christ.

USE OF PAINFUL PRACTICES

Some Roman Catholics believe that they will receive special favours from God or the saints if they do painful things such as whipping themselves or walking barefoot on their knees. This is similar to the ancient pagan religions, where their followers are required to inflict pain in order to appease or receive favour from their gods. A good example of this in Scripture is where the priests of Baal cut themselves with sharp objects until they bled to gain favour from their god (see *1Kings 18:20-35*).

FORBIDDING MARRIAGE AND FOODS

The Word of God connects the forbidding of marriage and the forbidding of people to eat certain foods directly to the doctrines of demons:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

(1Timothy 4:1-4)

Celibacy is scriptural, yet it is a matter of calling or personal conviction and not of external compulsion (see *Matthew 19:10-13; 1Corinthians 7*). Peter and most of the other Apostles were married. The Apostle Paul asked:

Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brother and Cephas?

(1Corinthians 9:5)

Even in the early Roman Catholic Church many priests had wives, but later some popes decided they would have more power and wealth if the priests remained single. After that they decreed laws that forbid any priest to get married.

Some believe it was these laws that gave rise to the widespread sexual immorality, perversion, seduction, rape, child abuse injustice and cruelty in that organization over the centuries to this very day. Personally, I believe it is love for these practices that makes many

within that organization desire to become her servant in the first place.

The Catholic Church also required abstinence from eating meat during Lent and on other special days. People who broke these rules were accused of heresy and punished. During the Inquisition Period, many were tortured and killed for eating meat or eggs, or drinking milk during Lent.

Until the Second Vatican Council it was considered to be a mortal sin for any Catholic to eat meat on Fridays. Only after that council did these rules become more relaxed. Most modern Catholics believe that they only need to abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and Friday during Lent.

The doctrine of abstaining from foods is in total contrast to the teaching given by Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament. Fasting too is scriptural, but, again, it was designed to be a matter of personal conviction and not of external compulsion. The Apostle Paul warns that Christians should not judge one another based on what they eat or drink and when they do it (*Colossians 2:16; Romans 14:1-9*).

USE OF IDOLATROUS OBJECTS

The Roman Catholic Church is built on idolatry, which can be defined as the religious worship of an image, material object, person, or anything that takes the place of complete devotion to God the Father.

Webster's Dictionary defines a charm as "anything worn to avert ill or secure good fortune." Charms are actually idols because people attribute power to them and put their trust in them instead of trusting in God.

Roman Catholicism has many objects which are believed to bring blessings and protection. They include rosaries, holy oil, holy water, blessed salt, relics, statues, crucifixes, medals, scapulars, holy cards or jewellery of Mary, the saints, the Archangel Michael, Jesus and the pope. The list also includes objects associated with visions or mystical experiences of saints, and anything related to apparitions of Mary.

The Rosary, the brown scapular and special devotions to Mary are said to help people get to heaven. Water from Lourdes, San Giovanni, the Saint Benedict medal, and objects associated with Padre Pio are believed to cause physical healing.

These are all ways of worshipping and trusting in material things instead of trusting in the Lord. They are accursed objects and will bring a curse on anyone who trusts in them. If you have any such object in your possession, I suggest you get rid of it from your home. God is your protection and true Christians must trust in Jesus and apply His blood to their lives through faith, and not trust in material objects, special words, rituals, or mute idols.

The Catholic Church itself is an idol. As we have seen, she claims that no one can get to heaven without her and without her sacraments. She calls herself Holy Mother Church, claims to be infallible, demands absolute loyalty and obedience from her

followers and puts a curse on anyone who contradicts her abominable traditions and doctrines.

The pope is also an idol and several of them have made idolatrous statements about themselves. Pope Leo XIII said in the year 1894 that as pope, he held on the Earth the place of God Almighty. Pope Pius X, who reigned from 1903 to 1914 and is now a canonized saint, said that when the Pope speaks, it is Jesus Christ Himself speaking. Pope Pius XI who ruled from 1922 to 1939 said that because he was the Vicar of Christ, he was also God on Earth.

NOTHING HAS CHANGED

Many Catholic apologists have admitted the Roman Church has taken on some un-Christian practices over the centuries, but that a major renewal of the Holy Spirit has been taking place as a result of the Second Vatican Council which addressed these issues.

Whatever “issues” that council addressed, it certainly did not include any of those we have mentioned above. On the contrary, it only reaffirmed that these un-biblical practices were still an integral part of their religion. For example, concerning the practice of indulgences that council had this to say:

Holy Mother Church again recommends the practice of indulgences to the faithful... Indulgences are the taking away of the temporal punishment due to sins when their guilt has already been forgiven. In granting an indulgence the Church uses its power as ministers of Christ's Redemption.

It teaches and commands that the usage of indulgences... should be kept in the Church; and it condemns with anathema those who say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them.

Regarding the use of scapulars and medals, the Second Vatican Council reaffirmed their use with the promise that:

The faithful who use with devotion an object of piety (crucifix, rosary, scapular or medal) after it has been blessed by any priest, can gain a partial indulgence. But if this object of piety is blessed by the Pope, or

any bishop, the faithful who wears it with devotion can also gain a plenary indulgence on the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

The council also reiterated other teachings, such as Jesus being worshipped in the “sacred host” which comprises the blessed sacrament; and Masses for the dead, for which that same council had this to say:

Holy Mother Church is extremely concerned for the faithful departed. She has decided to intercede for them to the fullest extent in every Mass. The Church offers the Paschal Sacrifice (the Mass) for the dead so that the dead may be helped by the prayers, and the living may be consoled by hope.

These are just a few examples of the many pagan practices that were re-affirmed and re-iterated by the Second Vatican Council. Yet they are enough to show that they re-proposed the decrees of the Second Council of Nicaea, the Council of Florence and the Council of Trent. What they have long taught and believed is still taught and believed in Catholicism today.

An Obvious Sign

Despite the many abominable errors of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the centuries, and even more so today, more and more supposedly Evangelical Christians are subtly being led to believe that Roman Catholicism is a valid expression of the Christian faith and an authentic Christian Church working for the evangelisation of the world.

For anyone with eyes to see, the mission of that corrupt organization is not to bring men and women to a saving faith in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the soul, but to bring the masses within that church itself for the salvation of her wealth!

The Roman Catholic Church may profess to preach “the gospel,” but it is not the Gospel received and proclaimed by the Apostles. It is *a different gospel*, which, in the words of the Apostle Paul, is really no gospel at all (see *Galatians 1:6*). Paul goes on to say this to those who would not preach the Gospel he had received from the Lord and preached:

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

(Galatians 1:8-10)

HOPE FOR BORN-AGAIN CATHOLICS

I have no doubt there are probably hundreds of thousands of Roman Catholics who have found a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and serve Him faithfully, not because of the Roman Catholic Church but in spite of it. Yet as long as you remain in that religious system, it will be very difficult for you to fulfil your destiny that God has for you in Christ.

If you are one of those people, I urge you to follow the example of Paul, who having discovered that what he had long believed was far removed from the truth, turned his back on his former religion and the praise of men, considering it a waste for the sake of knowing Christ (*Philippians 3:7-12*).

Like him, many believers down through the centuries have had to endure reproach as followers of Jesus (*1 Peter 4:14*), but now they are among those who are rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name (see *Acts 5:41*).

In addition, after his conversion Paul immediately sought out the disciples who were at Damascus (*Acts 9:19*). May I encourage you to do the same. Seek out an assembly, or small group, which is composed of true believers.

There are also hundreds of thousands of other Roman Catholics who may not be Born Again and may not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, but who are sincerely seeking the truth and the freedom to be found in Him.

If you are one of those people, I encourage you to emulate those early Christians, who, having listened to what the Apostle Paul had to say about most of the issues under consideration, “*Examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true*” (*Acts 17:11*).

Table A

Acts 9:13, 32, 41, 26:10;

Romans 1:7, 8:27, 12:13, 15:25, 31, 16:2, 15

1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:1, 14:33, 16:1, 15

2 Corinthians 1:1, 8:4, 9:1, 12, 13:13

Ephesians 1:1, 15, 18, 2:19, 3:8, 18, 1:14, 5:3, 6:18

Philippians 1:1, 4:22

Colossians 1:2, 4, 12, 26

1 Thessalonians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:10

1 Timothy 5:10; Jude 1:3, 14

Hebrews 6:10, 13:24

Table B

Romans 1:16-18, 3:20-29, 4:1-25, 6:14, 23, 10:9-14

Galatians 1:8-10, 2:15-21, 3:1-6, 3:10-12, 23, 5:5-7

John 3:14-19, 5:24, 6:40; Ephesians 2:4-10, 3:10-13

Acts 10:43, 13:38-40; 1 Corinthians 1:21-24

1 Peter 1:3-6; 1 John 4:13-16

2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9

Joel 2:32; Mark 16:16; Genesis 15:6

Hebrews 11:7; Titus 3:5

Table C

Romans 6:13-22; 1 John 4:13

Ephesians 1:18-20, 2:10, 3:16-20; 2 Corinthians 5:17, 13:5

1 Corinthians 2:12, 6:17; 2 Timothy 1:6; Ezekiel 36:26