

## Are Catholics Christians?

By Richard Bennett

The Catholic Church presupposes itself to be Christian. Nothing could be farther from the truth; yet, the Catholic Church has presented and promoted herself in that guise particularly since the close of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. A primary, non-negotiable goal of Vatican Council II was to lay the groundwork and to establish the rules and parameters for a multifaceted, ecumenical outreach. Evangelical Christians, now called “separated brethren”, rather than “heretics”,<sup>1</sup> are the primary target of Catholic ecumenism. The goal is to draw them into the Roman Catholic fold.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the word “Christian” occurs more than 100 times in these official teachings. Buzzwords such as “dialogue”, “ecumenism”, and “social justice” are being used under the guise of promoting true Christianity while advancing the Roman Catholic agenda.

### Assurances to Evangelicals Negated

Evangelicals are assured that Catholics who believe in the incarnation, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are true Christians, even though they misunderstand some of the “technicalities” regarding salvation. Such reasoning is negated by the fact that Catholicism differs from biblical faith—not only on minor details, but more importantly on what is essential for one’s salvation.

The most dangerous aspect of Catholic Church doctrine is that it appears to be based on the great, indispensable truths of God’s revelation.<sup>3</sup> In reality, however, the telling fact is that Catholic doctrine denies essential, biblical doctrines by that which it adds on to biblical truths. For example, while Catholic doctrine affirms the worship of the three distinct Persons of the Trinity, it adds divine adoration for the Virgin Mary by addressing her in prayer as “the All Holy One”. The exact words of the official statement are, “By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the ‘Mother of Mercy,’ the All Holy One”.<sup>4</sup> The Catholic Church also demands that worship, which according to Scripture is due exclusively to the one true God in three persons, is also to be given to the

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<sup>1</sup> The anathemas or curses against Evangelicals as heretics still remain in Roman Catholic law because the Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) has never been revoked. Since the demise of the Holy Roman Empire, the Papacy has had no military and civil power by which to enforce these anathemas as it had during the 605 years of the Inquisition. Thus the Papacy has recently adopted “ecumenism, “dialogue,” and promoting “social justice” as ways and means of drawing Evangelical Christians into its fold.

<sup>2</sup> *Vatican Council II Documents*, “Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue,” Vol. I, Sect. II. This crucial Vatican document states, “...ecumenical dialogue is not limited to an academic or purely conceptual level, but striving for a more complete communion between the Christian communities...it serves to transform modes of thought and behavior and the daily life of those communities. [non-Catholic churches] In this way, it aims at preparing the way for their unity of faith in the bosom of a Church one and visible: thus ‘little by little’, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesial communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into that unity of the one and only Church which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose...”

<sup>3</sup> For example she holds to the existence of a self-existent and eternal God, the Creator of the universe, of man, and of all things. She teaches the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. She teaches Adam’s sin resulting in the shared guilt and consequences of his sin. She accepts the doctrine of man’s redemption by Jesus Christ, teaching that He became incarnate and endured the death of the cross; that He arose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and will return again.

<sup>4</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Liguori Publications, 1994 Paragraph 2677 Hereafter referred to as *Catechism*.

“Sacrament” or “Eucharist”, the Communion element. Thus, the Church of Rome officially declares,

“There should be no doubt in anyone’s mind ‘that all the faithful ought to show to this most holy sacrament the worship which is due to the true God, as has always been the custom of the Catholic Church. Nor is it to be adored any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten’”.<sup>5</sup>

These two official teachings of the Church of Rome show that the divine worship due to God alone is being given to Mary and to their communion element. In addition, the essential doctrine of man’s redemption by Jesus Christ is totally different in Papal Rome from that of the Bible. The Scripture declares that sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, are “*by grace*” “*saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*”.<sup>6</sup> This Scripture shows that God directly saves sinners by His grace through faith. However, the Catholic Church insists on the necessity of her sacraments and consequently states,

“The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*. ‘Sacramental grace’ is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament”.<sup>7</sup>

The sacraments, which are declared by the Catholic Church to be indispensable, nullify the biblical doctrine of man’s redemption. With these explicit examples of the Catholic Church’s negation of essential biblical truths, the Papacy’s official doctrine and teaching on all the major topics of biblical truth need to be carefully examined.

### **The Basis of Truth**

The first topic to address is, “What is the basis of truth?” In other words, what is the norm by which we can know truth? The absolute standard set by the Lord Jesus Christ rests in the fact that “*the scripture cannot be broken*”.<sup>8</sup> He who identified Himself to His disciples, “*I am the way, the truth and the life*”, also declared the truth of God’s Word by praying for them, “*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*”.<sup>9</sup> From these Scriptures we understand that God’s Word not only contains the truth, but is truth itself. The Holy Scripture is the source of the believer’s standard of truth. Since Scripture alone is inspired, it alone is the ultimate authority, and it alone is the final judge of all human tradition and reasoning. Accordingly, the commandment of the Lord states, “*Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar*”.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in His written Word, the absolute authority of the Lord God is totally sufficient for all the believer’s needs. The Apostle Paul confirmed this when he wrote, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*”.<sup>11</sup> The Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they placed their human tradition on the same level as the written Word of God. Thus, the Pharisees corrupted the people’s understanding by confusing them in regards to God’s Word as the very

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<sup>5</sup> *Vatican Council II Documents, Eucharisticum Mysterium,*” Vol. I, Para 3 (Emphasis not in original.)

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 2:8, 9

<sup>7</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 1129

<sup>8</sup> John 10:35

<sup>9</sup> John 17:17

<sup>10</sup> Proverbs 30:6

<sup>11</sup> II Timothy 3:16-17

basis of truth. Jesus declared to them, “[You are] *making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered*”.<sup>12</sup>

In spite of this unmistakably clear standard of truth, the Catholic Church declares her own standard of truth. She begins her reasoning with the following words,

“Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other” “And [Holy] *Tradition* transmits in its entirety the Word of God, which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit”.<sup>13</sup>

The fact is that no “tradition” transmits in its entirety the Word of God. This task is solely that of the Holy Spirit. First, in an exclusive sense, the Scriptures are the composition of the Holy Spirit; as stated by the Apostle Peter, “*holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*”.<sup>14</sup> The Holy Spirit is fully fitted for this work because He is “*the Spirit of truth*”.<sup>15</sup> He has perfect knowledge of the truth because He is God, one with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit reveals the truth of the written Word to believers. For this reason the Lord Christ Jesus said, “*He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you*”.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit perfectly transmits the Word of God in its proper fullness.

Having equated her “Sacred Tradition” with Sacred Scripture, and having stated that her tradition transmits the Word of God in its entirety, the Catholic Church reaches its conclusion with the following words,

“As a result the [Catholic] Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, ‘does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence’”.<sup>17</sup>

This statement is a formal denial of the sufficiency of Scripture and a repudiation of its unique authority. For a church, claiming to be Christian, to attach as much importance to tradition as she does to Scripture is to totally devalue Scripture. It is like a husband who declares that he loves his wife and at the same time states that he also loves equally the woman across the street. Such love would be adulterous; so also are Papal Rome’s “equal sentiments of devotion and reverence”. Such a declaration is tantamount to a rejection of Scripture and unfaithfulness to the God of Scripture.

Catholicism, however, does have a standard for truth that is taken to be absolute. It is not the unqualified authority of God in His written Word; rather, it is the authority of a man, the Pope of Rome. For Catholics, the ultimate authority lies in the decisions and decrees of the reigning Pope. This is seen in their official teaching which states,

“The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful...he proclaims with a definitive act that a doctrine of faith or morals is to be held as such”.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Mark 7:13

<sup>13</sup> *Catechism* Paragraphs 80, 81

<sup>14</sup> II Peter 1:20, 21

<sup>15</sup> John 16:13 “*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth*”.

<sup>16</sup> John 16:15

<sup>17</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 82

<sup>18</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 891

Thus, in practice, the Catholic Church's basis for doctrine is her pope and what he states to be truth. In other words, this is truth claimed by decree. The absurdity of this claim is evident when we remember that several popes were declared to be heretics and thus condemned by Church councils.<sup>19</sup>

### **Salvation by Grace Alone Denied by Catholic Sacramental System**

That salvation is by God's grace alone must be clearly understood. Unredeemed sinners, all of whom are "*dead in trespasses and sins*",<sup>20</sup> can only be saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone because salvation is "*the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast*".<sup>21</sup> It is God who graciously saves by His unmerited free gift. In total contrast to this, salvation in the Catholic Church is said to come about by "grace" that is merely a "help" with the intention that people will respond. Thus, the Catholic Church officially states, "Grace is the help God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life".<sup>22</sup> In this view, human beings are presumed to be good enough to respond to the help that God gives to them. According to the Catholic Church, grace is not a manifestation of God's sovereign action in salvation but merely a "help" given to humans that they may respond, should they decide to believe. The Catholic teaching contradicts the very concept of grace. As the Scripture states, "*and if by grace, then is it [salvation] no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace*".<sup>23</sup> God's sovereign action is what is at stake and not uncertain, human response.

The Catholic concept of "grace" denies God's sovereign grace. Therefore, the Papacy needed to construct a mechanism by which Catholics can profess that they have received grace. The primary tools of their invention are called the "Sacraments". Accordingly, the Catholic Church states,

"The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*. 'Sacramental grace' is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament".<sup>24</sup>

This teaching is appalling. In the Bible, salvation is given to an individual by the absolute power of God's grace alone – because in God alone is the power to deliver a man from being spiritually "*dead in trespasses and sins*" to being spiritually alive in Christ. However, the Catholic Church adamantly disagrees with the Bible on this primary issue, for it officially claims, "man has only been wounded by sin".<sup>25</sup> Thus, her *Catechism* describes God's grace as a "help" accessible through her sacraments. These sacraments are in turn totally under the control of the Catholic priesthood.

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<sup>19</sup> For example, Pope Honorius I (625-38) was posthumously condemned as a heretic and excommunicated from the Church by the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681 A.D.) He was also condemned as a heretic by Pope Leo II, as well as by every other pope until the eleventh century. It was not until 1870 at Vatican Council I that the Catholic Church for the first time declared that the Pope is infallible.

<sup>20</sup> Ephesians 2:1, "*and you... who were dead in trespasses and sins.*"

<sup>21</sup> Ephesians 2:9

<sup>22</sup> *Catechism*, Paragraph 2021

<sup>23</sup> Romans 11:6

<sup>24</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 1129

<sup>25</sup> *Vatican Council II Documents*, No. 64, "Gaudium et Spes," 1965, Vol. I, Sect. 14

We absolutely praise the Lord God that from Scripture we can be sure that His grace is totally His free gift, “*wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved*”.<sup>26</sup> In salvation, we are accepted not in any institution, or by partaking of any sacrament, but in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

### **Papal Substitute for Christ Alone as Object of Faith**

The object of faith is clearly seen in Scripture as the person of Christ Jesus Himself. Consequently, it is stated, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*”.<sup>27</sup> This faith is God-given faith, as declared by the Apostle Peter, “*Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*”.<sup>28</sup> This God-given faith comes by hearing the Word of God as is stated, “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*”.<sup>29</sup> The topic of faith is so clear in Scripture that one would doubt that it could be twisted by any church. Nonetheless, the Catholic Church does manage to completely change the concept of faith. Regarding faith, she doesn’t deal directly with the individual, but focuses attention on herself, “the Church”, as the object of faith and commitment, and as the one that first believes. Thus she teaches, “It is the Church that believes first, and so bears, nourishes and sustains my faith”.<sup>30</sup> Then, very audaciously and misleadingly, she declares, “faith comes through the Church because the Church is our Mother”. As a result she officially teaches, “Salvation comes from God alone; but because we receive the life of faith through the Church, she is our mother...”.<sup>31</sup> In the Catholic Church the result is that a person believes in “Mother Church” and not on the Lord Jesus Christ. Her official words stating this are the following,

“‘Believing’ is an ecclesial act. The Church’s faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith. The Church is the mother of all believers. ‘No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother’”.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, Roman Catholics are compelled to submit to “holy Mother Church” and accept her teaching. Without biblical warrant, the Catholic Church seeks to replace Jesus Christ as the object of saving faith with a substitute; namely, faith in “Mother Church”.

The effect of this change is the enslaving of individuals to the Roman Catholic Church rather than the freedom obtained by faith in Jesus Christ alone. To maintain the Catholic Church as the object of faith, the Papacy curses all who believe on Christ by faith alone. The official words of “Mother Church” are,

“If anyone says that by the sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred *ex opere operato* [from the work worked], but that faith alone in the divine promise is sufficient to obtain grace, let him be anathema [cursed]”.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ephesians 1:6

<sup>27</sup> Acts 16:31

<sup>28</sup> II Peter 1:1

<sup>29</sup> Romans 10:17

<sup>30</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 168

<sup>31</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 169

<sup>32</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 181

<sup>33</sup> *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, 7th Session, March, 1547 (Rockford, IL: Tan Publishers, Inc., 1978) This curse against those who believe that Christ alone is the object of their saving faith has never been lifted. For centuries, the horrendous tortures of the Papacy’s Inquisition were used throughout Europe and Britain to wipe out all believers whose faith was in Christ alone. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Papacy no longer had the

### **Christ's Sufficient Once and For All Sacrifice**

The unique oneness of Christ's sacrifice is the fact that it was one offering—once made. The concept "once" is deemed so important that it is asserted seven times by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. The perfection of Christ's sacrifice is contrasted with the repeated daily sacrifices of the Old Testament. The truth of the excellence of Christ's sacrifice is highlighted by the word "once". For example, the Apostle Paul teaches, "*for in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God*".<sup>34</sup> The Apostle Peter likewise declares, "*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*".<sup>35</sup> The same truth is taught five times in the book of Hebrews with the conclusion, "*So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation*".<sup>36</sup> The majestic truth is found in the Lord's declaration from the cross, "*It is finished*".<sup>37</sup>

In total contrast, the Catholic Church declares that Christ's sacrifice, which was offered on the cross, is contained and offered in her Mass. Her official words, which are in defiance of Scripture, are the following,

"In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and **is offered** in an unbloody manner".<sup>38</sup> However, the Bible teaches that "*without shedding of blood is no remission*".<sup>39</sup>

Quite unbelievably she reaches an even more outlandish conclusion. She declares that the sacrifice of Christ is also a sacrifice of the Church offering herself with Him. The official words are, "The Church, which is the Body of Christ, participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire".<sup>40</sup> It is utterly blasphemous for a church to teach its members to offer themselves with Christ's sacrifice. The doctrine of participating in Christ's sacrifice is entirely perverse and immoral. This proposition is totally false as it denies the repeated statements of God's truth in Scripture. The work of redemption is "*by Himself*",<sup>41</sup> "*without the deeds of the law*",<sup>42</sup> "*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us*".<sup>43</sup> To teach people such a proposition is a dreadful abomination before the Lord God!

### **The Nature of God as The Only All Holy One**

The Bible clearly teaches that God alone is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His Being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Most important is the fact that He is the All Holy One. His holiness is the divine attribute that covers all attributes so that His

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military and civil power to enforce her sinister doctrine. But by the mid-twentieth century, the Papacy's new tools had been formed against those whose faith is in Christ alone: Ecumenism, dialogue, and "social justice" were formally unveiled at Vatican Council II. The method has changed; but the goal has not.

<sup>34</sup> Romans 6:10

<sup>35</sup> I Peter 3:18

<sup>36</sup> Hebrews 9:28

<sup>37</sup> John 19:30

<sup>38</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 1367 (Emphasis not in original)

<sup>39</sup> Hebrews 9:22

<sup>40</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 1368

<sup>41</sup> Hebrews 1:3

<sup>42</sup> Romans 3:28

<sup>43</sup> Titus 3:5

righteousness is holy, His truth is holy, and His justice is holy. He is each of His attributes, and the overall attribute of holiness is that which separates Him from all beings. His holiness is distinctive and matchless. This is the reason why we need to be saved by Him, the All Holy God. Thus, we read in Scripture, “*there is none holy as the Lord*”.<sup>44</sup> Again, the Word of the Lord proclaims, “*who shall not fear thee O Lord and glorify Thy name for thou only art holy and all nations shall come and worship before thee*”.<sup>45</sup> The Lord God is utterly holy in the words of Scripture, “*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory*”.<sup>46</sup> In addition to declaring the holiness of God, the official teaching of the Catholic Church declares Mary to be “the All Holy One”. The capital letters are there in print, and there is no disclaimer or footnote to explain differently what is said. The following is stated, “By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the ‘Mother of Mercy,’ the All Holy One”.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, Catholic teaching also officially states, “From the Church he [the Catholic] learns the example of holiness and recognizes its model and source in the all-holy Virgin Mary...”.<sup>48</sup> This blasphemous teaching is an attempted theft of the very essence of the divine glory reserved unto God alone. It comes as a shock to many to see that in this very doctrine the Papacy displays its total disregard for the Godhead. We know that the Sovereign Lord God alone is the All Holy One and that He is protective of His glory, opposing all that are hostile to it, “*I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another*”.<sup>49</sup>

## **Idolatry**

The Scriptures are absolutely clear in declaring that we are neither to make a graven image nor show any veneration to such images, “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything...Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them*”.<sup>50</sup> Then Scripture explains how this is to be understood, “*and he [God] declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even Ten Commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake...Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure...*”.<sup>51</sup> Hence, there is to be no similitude (or likeness) of God made by mankind. That which is forbidden in Scripture is the making of any likeness of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. The Catholic Church, however, rationalizes that one can indeed practice idolatry. Paragraph 2132 of the 1994 *Catechism* states,

“The Christian veneration of images is not contrary to the first commandment which proscribes idols. Indeed, ‘the honor rendered to an image passes to its prototype,’ and ‘whoever venerates an image venerates the person portrayed in it.’”

The reason given is that one venerates the person portrayed by the image and not the image itself. Yet, this is exactly what the Bible forbids and why God’s second commandment had forbidden Aaron from making the golden calf.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> I Samuel 2:2

<sup>45</sup> Revelation 15:4

<sup>46</sup> Isaiah 6:3

<sup>47</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 2677

<sup>48</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 2030

<sup>49</sup> Isaiah 42:8

<sup>50</sup> Exodus 20:4-5

<sup>51</sup> Deuteronomy 4:13, 15-16

<sup>52</sup> Exodus 32:4-9

The second reason given by Papal Rome to justify the practice of idolatry, cites the ruling of an 8<sup>th</sup> century council, which states the following,

“Basing itself on the mystery of the incarnate Word, the seventh ecumenical council at Nicaea (787) justified against the iconoclasts the veneration of icons - of Christ, but also of the Mother of God, the angels, and all the saints. By becoming incarnate, the Son of God introduced a new ‘economy’ of images.”<sup>53</sup>

When the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicaea decided that the incarnation of Jesus Christ introduced a new “economy” of images, the unstated logic of their decision required them to maintain that God changed His mind regarding the Second Commandment. Such reasoning is blasphemy. God does not change His mind. Jesus Christ and the Apostles were equally forthright in condemning idolatry, just as were the commandments of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church claims that a “tradition comes from the Holy Spirit” which justifies the making of graven images and these are to be publicly displayed. Thus in its *Catechism*, Paragraph 1161 states,

“Following the divinely inspired teaching of our holy Fathers” and the tradition of the Catholic Church (for we know that this tradition comes from the Holy Spirit who dwells in her) we rightly define with full certainty and correctness that, like the figure of the precious and life-giving cross, venerable and holy images of our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ, our inviolate Lady, the holy Mother of God, and the venerated angels, all the saints and the just, whether painted or made of mosaic or another suitable material, are to be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on sacred vessels and vestments, walls and panels, in houses and on streets”.

This is the “Mother Church’s full license for idolatry—plain, simple, and condemned by the Lord God.

The Holy Spirit is also forthrightly blasphemed in the claim that He established tradition to justify the use of images. Rather, the Bible makes abundantly clear that God hates idolatry and forbids a representation in art of what is divine (Exodus. 20:4-6). Making images to represent God corrupts those who use them (Deuteronomy 4:13, 15-16). Images teach lies about God (Habakkuk. 2:18-20). God cannot be represented in art and all who practice such idolatry are commanded to repent (Acts 17:29-30). The Holy Spirit issues His warning in the New Testament as He did in the Old, “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen*” (I John. 5:21). Among the evil fruits of bringing idolatry that God hates into worship are the many pagan superstitions and traditions of Roman Catholicism. But the worst fruit of the idolatry that is rife in Roman Catholic worship under the guise of being Christian is its false gospel.

The topic of idolatry is of utmost importance as many present day Bible-believing churches attempt to justify pictures and videos of Christ. They argue that both we, and those who cannot read, can come to a fuller understanding of the person of Christ from these images. Yet, the Bible clearly states that such images lie. Jesus Christ is the only one with two distinct natures – both divine and human – in one body. Therefore, to attempt to make any kind of an image of Jesus Christ, graven or two dimensional or moving, still falls under the Second Commandment.

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<sup>53</sup> *Catechism* Paragraph 2131

No image can portray Christ's divinity, for He "*is the brightness of his [God's] glory and the express image of his person*",<sup>54</sup> "*in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*".<sup>55</sup>

If we are to be biblical, we must avoid or reject any pictorial representation or video showing the persons of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. The punishment for idolatry is severe, as both Old and New Testament make clear.<sup>56</sup> For any temptation to visualize Christ, the Father, or the Holy Spirit, there must be repentance; for God is Holy, and the truth of the Bible is sufficient to provide for all our knowledge of things divine.

### **Idolatry of the Mass**

At the heart of Roman Catholicism is the Mass or Eucharist, described by the Second Vatican Council as "the fount and apex of the whole Christian life". Papal Rome claims that the Mass is a sacrifice and that the sacrifice of Calvary and the Mass are the same, "one single sacrifice". Thus she teaches,

"The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: 'The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different.' 'In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner.'"<sup>57</sup>

The Holy Spirit's teaching, however, is that Christ's sacrifice was **once** offered, in contrast to the daily offering of sacrifices of the Old Testament, "*nor yet that he should offer himself often...for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*".<sup>58</sup> Divine perfection is seen in the fact that it was one sacrifice, once offered.

We list several grievous departures of "the Eucharistic Sacrifice" from the divine perfection of the Atonement as revealed in Scripture: Firstly, to provide a re-enactment of the one offering, once offered, is to set out to undermine the will and purpose of God. Secondly, for anyone to deem himself fit to offer **the** Lord Jesus Christ in His perfect sacrifice is simply arrogance of the highest order. Christ Jesus alone was qualified to offer Himself. He alone had the unique qualifications as the Holy Spirit teaches, "*For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens*".<sup>59</sup> Thirdly, the Catholic Church's claim is that Christ "is offered in an unbloody manner". However Scripture equates offering and suffering. In a propitiatory sacrifice, to offer and to suffer are the same thing. This truth is so important that it is given as an absolute principle, "*without shedding of blood is no remission*".<sup>60</sup> Hence, in this context, to propose a bloodless sacrifice is a contradiction in terms. A bloodless sacrifice is a senseless inconsistency that can have no purpose other than to deceive.

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<sup>54</sup> Hebrews 1:3

<sup>55</sup> Colossians 2:9

<sup>56</sup> Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 4:13, 15-16; Habakkuk 2:18-20; Acts 17:29-30 Thus, the Holy Spirit commands in both Old and New Testaments, "*little children, keep yourselves from idols*" I John 5:21.

<sup>57</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition, Para 1367

<sup>58</sup> Hebrews 9:25-26

<sup>59</sup> Hebrews 7:26

<sup>60</sup> Hebrews 9:22

Fourthly, the Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice; it is a memorial. The bread and wine are tokens symbolizing the body and blood of the once and for all sacrifice of Calvary. We are to eat and drink them to remember Him and His atonement with thanksgiving and praise until He returns.

Today there are in the Catholic Church convents of nuns devoted to worshipping the Eucharist on a rotational system day and night. There are devout Catholics who spend hours kneeling before the "blessed sacrament" worshipping and praying to it and obtaining solace, they say, from being in the "real presence" of Christ Jesus. The horrifying fact is that such people, professing that they are worshipping Christ in a religious and holy way, are literally practising gross idolatry. Worship of the sacrament brings about the wrath of God as promised in His Word. Idolatry is spiritual adultery. The Lord God looks upon those who practice idolatry as haters of Himself, though they pretend to love Him. The Scripture plainly states that He will visit the iniquity "*of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments*".<sup>61</sup>

In the sixteenth century, during the reign of Mary I, or "bloody Mary", many of the martyrs who died in the fire in England chose to do so because of just four words of Scripture, "*in remembrance of me*".<sup>62</sup> Had they been willing to set aside these words, or at least given them a "liberal interpretation", they could have saved themselves. Because they trusted Christ and upheld His Word they refused to do so. For them, the Word of God was truth and life. In affirming these words, the martyrs were denying the Roman Catholic Church doctrine that the communion elements of bread and wine contain the actual physical body and blood of Christ, together with His soul and divinity.<sup>63</sup>

## Conclusion

As we have sought to demonstrate, the Roman Catholic Church most certainly is not Christian. Rather, it is an apostate church. The Bible, God's written word is the inerrant and infallible authority against the apostasy of the Catholic Church and against her false gospel. The Scriptures make clear that by nature, we are all born "*dead in trespasses and sins*",<sup>64</sup> and in practice, we rebel against the All Holy God. Therefore, we justly fall under the curse of the Law. Yet, the love of the heavenly Father, through the Gospel of grace, rescues His own from His fiery wrath. By means of the conviction of sin, placed on the human heart by the Holy Spirit, He by His grace alone turns us to Himself in faith alone for the salvation that He alone gives. This salvation is based on Christ's death and resurrection for His own. As a result we believe on Jesus Christ the Lord alone, "*for by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast*".<sup>65</sup> Thus by the

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<sup>61</sup> Exodus 20:5-6

<sup>62</sup> Luke 22:19

<sup>63</sup> This is the dogma in the Catholic Church that is called "transubstantiation." Thus, the official teaching is in the *Catechism* of the Catholic Church. Para 1376 states, "The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation."

<sup>64</sup> Ephesians 2:1

<sup>65</sup> Ephesians 2:8, 9

abundant grace given by Jesus Christ we are not only redeemed from the empire of death, but we can live and reign with Him as we are sanctified daily through His Word by the Holy Spirit and by constant fellowship with Him. With Him also we shall forever live and reign, world without end. Through Christ Jesus, grace reigns with sovereign freedom, power, and bounty! *“Blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.”*<sup>66</sup> ♦

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<sup>66</sup> Psalm 72:19