

Fatima, The Pope and the Vatican Contradict the Gospel

Where do Evangelical ECT signatories now stand?

by Richard Bennett

The fanfare of Jubilee Year 2000 continued when on May 13th Pope John Paul II gave his homily at the occasion of the beatification ceremony for Francisco and Jacinta Marto at Fatima, Portugal. (For those unfamiliar with Fatima, in 1917, a vision claiming to be Mary appeared to three shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal.) What John Paul II has done, perhaps inadvertently, through his homily is to cause two very significant issues to rise to the surface regarding “Marian devotion”: first, the apparition’s message concerning salvation, and second, how the Pope has explained the same message.

His homily is fully in line with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly the Office of the Inquisition), the Roman Catholic Church’s official department whose “orientation is...in the condemnation of error...[and] in the promotion of **orthodox doctrine**.”¹ That department states that the message of Fatima “with its urgent call to conversion and penance, draws us to the heart of the Gospel.”²

“Mary” ready to lead them safely to God

Prefacing his remarks on the Fatima visions by citing Matthew 11:25, that God “was pleased to reveal the kingdom to the merest children”, the Pope without comment reviewed briefly the history of the visions,

“According to the divine plan, ‘a woman clothed with the sun’ (Rv. 12:1) came down from heaven to this earth to visit the privileged children...She **asks them to offer themselves as victims of reparation, saying that she was ready to lead them safely to God**. And behold, **they see a light shining from her maternal hands which penetrates them inwardly**, so that they feel immersed in God...”³

In Scripture “*the God of all grace*”⁴ seeks, finds, and saves His people. The good news is stated in Romans 3:24, “*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*.” This is the pure free grace of God showing, as it were, the very heart of God. Salvation is God’s demonstration of His own righteousness in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ in His perfect life and sacrificial death. It is God’s act alone and not that of any woman “**ready to lead them safely to God**”. John Paul’s blasphemous words, however, are in total accord with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) that says,

“This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterrupted...until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside **this saving office** but by her manifold intercession **continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation**.”⁵

¹ *Catholic Almanac* (Huntington, IN 46750: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1998) p.145. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.

² http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/co.../rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.htm

³ [Http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_p.../hf_jp-ii_hom_20000513_beatification-fatima_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_p.../hf_jp-ii_hom_20000513_beatification-fatima_en.htm) 6/1/00. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.

⁴ I Peter 5:10.

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994) #969.

It is one thing to recount an historical event. It is another thing entirely for a man who claims to be Holy God's infallible teaching authority on earth blatantly to endorse a lying wonder. Does papal teaching such as this not attempt to rob God of His glory? Notwithstanding the Pope's proclamation, the All Holy God shows forth the magnificent splendor of His justice in the Lord Jesus Christ's redemptive work.

Message of Grace Alone snubbed

The Pope continued in his recitation of the Fatima history, "But God told only Francisco 'how sad' he was....He [Francisco] was motivated by one desire... 'to console Jesus and make him happy'. A transformation takes place in his life...He devotes himself to an intense spiritual life...and attains a true form of mystical union with the Lord....Francisco bore without complaining the great sufferings caused by the illness from which he died....Little Francisco had a **great desire to atone for the offenses of sinners by striving to be good and by offering his sacrifices and prayers.** The life of Jacinta, his younger sister...was motivated by these same sentiments."

When the Pope says that Francisco "attain[ed] a true form of mystical union with the Lord", he is teaching pantheistic myth. There is no union with Holy God in Scripture other than that explained consistently by the Lord's Word ⁶, for example, Philippians 3:9, "*To be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*" The *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines a mystic as one who "professes to have direct intercourse with the Spirit of God." It is no wonder that the Pope affirms myth in Vatican Council II Documents, "...in **Hinduism** men explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of philosophy."⁷

Nor has the Pope applied to his recounting of this historical event the doctrine taught in Ephesians 2:8-9, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: **not of works, lest any man should boast.***" Rather, his unscriptural teaching is directly in line with the same *Catechism*, produced under his auspices, which states under the heading of "Grace and Justification",

"We can have merit in God's sight only because of God's free plan **to associate man with the work of his grace.**" (#2025)

The Pope's homily sheds further light on official Catholic teaching when in this context he cites Francisco's illness, for the same *Catechism* also teaches,

"*Union with the Passion of Christ...**Suffering, a consequence of original sin, acquires a new meaning; it becomes a participation in the saving work of Jesus.***" (#1521)

The Pope's teaching is a total negation of the Lord's Written word that the work of redemption is "*by Himself,*"⁸ "*without the deeds of the law*"⁹ "*not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of*

⁶ Ephesians 1:6; Colossians 2:10, 3:3; II Peter 1:1, Psalm 32:2, 71:15-16, 130:3; Isaiah 45:24-25, 54:17, 61:10; Jeremiah 23:6, 33:16, 51:10; Daniel 9:24; Luke 18:14; Romans 1:17, 3:21-22, 4:6, 11, 5:18-19; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 5:21 and elsewhere.

⁷ No. 56, *Nostra Aetate*, 28 October, 1965 in *Vatican Council II the Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publ. Co., 1975) Vol. I, p. 739. All Vatican Council II documents are taken from this source

⁸ Hebrews 1:3.

⁹ Romans 3:28.

*works, lest any man should boast*¹⁰ “*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us....*”¹¹

Pope interprets Fatima message

The Pope then interprets the message of Fatima for his hearers, “The message of Fatima is a call to conversion...” and he explains by doctrine and by example what that means,

“...the Blessed Virgin came here to Fatima to ask men and women ‘to stop offending God, our Lord, who is already very offended.’ It is a mother’s sorrow that compels her to speak; the destiny of her children is at stake. For this reason she asks the little shepherds: ‘Pray, pray much and make sacrifices for sinners; many souls go to hell because they have no one to pray and make sacrifices for them.’ *Little Jacinta* felt and personally experienced Our Lady’s anguish, **offering herself heroically as a victim for sinners....**”

Although the Pope has quoted Colossians 1:24 in relation to Jacinta, he clearly has misused that text by applying it to justification—to the eternal damnation of the very ones he purportedly is infallibly teaching. Out of a darkened understanding comes his phrase, “offering herself heroically as a victim for sinners”. The whole concept of offering oneself as a “victim for sinners” is a totally Roman Catholic concept, presupposing that the person is somehow good. It is not in the Bible.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the Perfect one, the only one able to make such a sacrifice, and this He did willingly as Scripture records, “*I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*” (John 10:17-18) Blatantly disregarding the Lord Jesus Christ’s words and the fact that He never was a victim, the Pope teaches, “**the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: ‘The victim is one and the same....**”¹² The RCC teaches her faithful that they, too, are to offer themselves with “the sacred victim”, the Lord Jesus Christ. The false gospel of offering one’s self to cooperate in one’s salvation is dramatized in their worship. So Rome proclaims,

“Therefore the **eucharistic celebration is the center of the assembly of the faithful** over which the priest presides. Hence priests teach the faithful **to offer the divine victim [Jesus Christ] to God the Father in the sacrifice of the Mass and with the victim to make an offering of their whole life...**”¹³

In contrast, when Christ died on the cross, He exclaimed, “*It is finished.*”¹⁴ The simple truth of Scripture is that “*there is no more offering for sin*”¹⁵—for Christ is the Sole Lamb of God.

Pope summarizes False Gospel

The Pope reiterates his theme of man-made salvation when in closing he says, “My last words for the children:...**Our Lady needs you all to console Jesus**, who is sad because of the bad things done to him; **he needs your prayers and your sacrifices for sinners**. Ask your parents and teachers to enroll you in the ‘school’ of Our Lady, so that she can teach you to be like the little shepherds, who tried to do whatever she asked them. I tell you that ‘one makes more progress in a short time of **submission and dependence on Mary** than during

¹⁰ Ephesians 2:8-9.

¹¹ Titus 3:5.

¹² *Catechism*, #1367.

¹³ Vatican Council II Documents, No. 63, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7 Dec 65, Vol. I, Sec 5, p. 871.

¹⁴ John 19:30.

¹⁵ Hebrews 10:18.

entire years of personal initiatives, relying on oneself alone...**May the message of their lives live on for ever to light humanity's way!**"

The most serious issue in all matters of faith is the Gospel. The Apostle Paul insisted, "*As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*" (Galatians 1:9) The children at Fátima persisted in the message that people needed to increase the level of their sacrifices because "...many souls go to hell because they have no one to sacrifice and pray for them." This stands in direct contradiction to the teaching in Hebrews that plainly states that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was the first, last, and only meritorious sacrifice for the remission of sins.

Through His all sufficient offering on the cross, Christ "*by Himself purged our sins*" and "*sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*" (1:3) The Holy Spirit's clear instruction is that the Gospel message is of one sacrifice of the one mediator, "*But this man, after he had offered **one sacrifice** for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.*"(10:12) "*For by **one offering** he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*"(10:14) Clearly, the visions of Mary at Fátima contradict the message of the Cross and, indeed, deny its efficacy. The vision of Mary has shown contempt for the sanctity and purpose of the Cross of Christ. It lied about its identity (i.e., Mary) and lied about its origins (i.e., heaven). The authority of the Apostle Paul weighs in on the matter: "*And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*"¹⁶

Fatima & ECT

ECT I ("Evangelicals & Catholics Together: the Christian Mission in the Third Millennium") stated that the issue of "devotion to Mary and the saints" needed to be "addressed more fully and candidly". Towards the end of ECT II ("The Gift of Salvation"), the statement is made,

"While we rejoice in the unity we have discovered and are confident of the fundamental truths about the gift of salvation we have affirmed, we recognize that there are necessarily interrelated questions that require further and urgent exploration. Among such questions are these...Marian devotion..."

Marian devotion was one of many items that ECT II declared requires "further and urgent exploration". This is now a signal requirement, particularly in the light of Pope John Paul II's homily. Thus the Evangelical ECT document signatories need to understand very clearly what the Pope actually meant when he said in his homily that these children were offering themselves as victims for sinners, for such a belief is part and parcel of Marian devotion, to which the Pope's homily gives irrefutable evidence.

The problem does not end there, for the Pope has not been speaking into a vacuum. Rather, it is through ecumenical dialogue, cemented in such events as the ECT documents, that the RCC continues to draw professing Christians and their churches into the blasphemous Eucharist, of which offering one's "good works" to supplement the Lord Jesus Christ's perfect complete work on the cross is part, as the Marian devotions undeniably demonstrate. Vatican Council II Document No. 42 states that ecumenical dialogue

"aims at preparing the way for their [professing Christians] 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,**

¹⁶ II Corinthians 11:14.

into that unity of the one and only Church which...we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose..."¹⁷

What "further and urgent exploration" has been done by any Evangelical signatories to the ECT documents on the teachings of John Paul II on May 13th when he proclaimed, "The message of Fatima is a call to conversion..." and that, "According to the divine plan, 'a woman clothed with the sun' (Rev 12: 1) came down from heaven to this earth to visit the privileged children of the Father"? Where do J. I. Packer, Timothy George, T. M. Moore, Charles Colson and other purported Evangelicals stand on their commitment to "urgent exploration"? (These same men have endorsed a false gospel message in the ECT documents, nor have they repented of this grave heresy.) The Roman Catholic signatories through the person of the Pope have made the RCC position crystal clear. They must be answered, either for or against, for there is no middle ground.

For Rome, the same "Mary"

John Paul II has received messages from "Mary". This acceptance of the "Mary" of the apparitions to be the Mary of the Bible changes the whole significance of what has happened on May 13th. The Roman Catholic Church has already declared much in its official teaching regarding Mary. Thus the same Pope teaches, "...the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix."¹⁸ What is so serious regarding these titles is the fact that in the Bible the Comforter, the Helper sent to take the Lord's place in the believer, is the Holy Spirit. He abides with the believer forever (John 14:16). He brings to mind Christ's words (John 14:26). He testifies not to Himself but to Christ (John 15:26). He guides believers into all truth (John 16:13). Truly the Holy Spirit is another Advocate, a divine Helper, the Comforter, and the Spirit of Truth. The seriousness of teaching that these divine roles of the Holy Spirit, and that of Christ Jesus as sole mediator belong to "Mary" is that such teaching denigrates the divine Persons of the Lord Christ Jesus of the Holy Spirit. This is grave heresy.

The same Pope also proclaims "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."¹⁹ "From the [Roman Catholic] Church he learns the example of holiness and recognizes its model and source in the all-holy Virgin Mary..."²⁰ Biblically, the Holiness of God is the essential characteristic of God that is expressed in all His attributes. To attempt to address a creature as the "All Holy One" is consummate blasphemy and idolatry. "*Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art Holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee...*"²¹ There are many other heresies in Rome's teaching about Mary. The basic assumption of the Pope, that the Mary of their dogma and the Mary of the apparitions are one, doubles, as it were, the deceptiveness that has come to light.

True Christians and the Apparitions

Bible Believing Christians should be aware of what has happened and what is happening, as well as the common theme of the teachings of Rome and the messages of "Mary". Since both

¹⁷ "Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue" S.P.U.C., 15 August 1975, p. 541.

¹⁸ *Catechism*, #969.

¹⁹ *Catechism*, #2677.

²⁰ *Catechism*, #2030.

²¹ Revelation 15:4.

popes and apparitions together insist that all humanity bow down and worship that image called the Eucharist, true believers are encouraged to investigate these issues further. Both the apparitions and the “Holy Father” of the Roman Catholic Church claim divine attributes for the papacy. In official teaching of the RCC,

“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.”²²

And

“The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, ‘supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls.’”²³

This claim to the divine attribute of infallibility, “supreme, full, immediate, and universal power”, can be achieved only by omnipresence, also a divine attribute. Both the apparitions and Rome’s official teaching claim divine distinctives that exalt the Pope “*above all that is called God.*”²⁴

Since both the Gospel of Salvation and the Divine Attributes are at stake, and the deception of millions, a decisive point is reached for true Christians. They must bear witness to the Lord, His Gospel, and the First and Second Commandments by calling these things what they are: apostasy. To do otherwise is to deny the Lord our Savior and His commandments.

How serious is apostasy?

We plead with the Evangelical signatories to the ECT documents to publish their “further and urgent exploration” regarding Marian devotion in the light of the high profile May 13th beatification celebration at Fátima. The joint Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) in May 1999 issued a statement “recognizing the Pope as the overall authority in the Christian World” and described him as “a gift to be received by all Churches”. How do the delegates of the Anglican Church worldwide and all those who have signed on to ARCIC assess the Pope’s endorsement of the apparitions of Mary at Fatima?

While apostasy is predicted in Scripture and has happened right through Christian history, it still comes as a shock to see it face-to-face. Nonetheless, the Apostle Paul’s command applies to believers in this present generation: “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*” A plain warning against false doctrine is especially needed in the present day, even as J. C. Ryle said of his day, “Surely the dumb dog and the sleeping shepherd are the best allies of the wolf, the thief, and the robber.” To the devout Pharisees of His day, the Lord said, “...*you shall die in your sins if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.*”²⁵ Fatima’s message has attempted to steal the Uniqueness and Glory of Christ Jesus the Lord. The Pope makes no secret of where He stands, endorsers of ECT and ARCIC need to show their hand. Ecumenists who remain loyal to the Pope thereby spurn the exclusivity and splendor of Christ and His Gospel, and will likewise die in their sins. ♦

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²² *Code of Canon Law Latin-English ed.* (Wash., DC 20064: Canon Law Society of America, 1983) Can. 749, Sec. 1.

²³ *Catechism*, #937.

²⁴ II Thessalonians 2:4.

²⁵ John 8:24.