

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

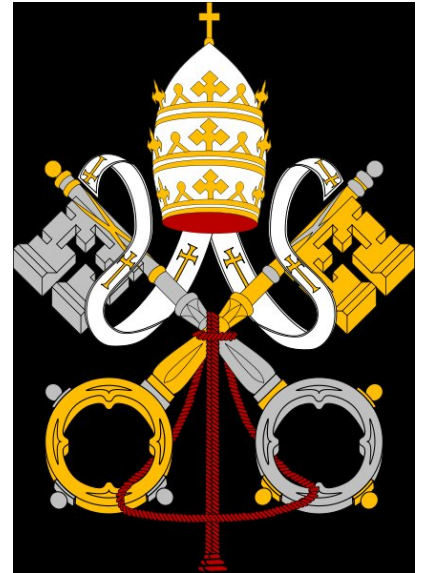


A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS & SECULAR MEDIA

SPECIAL REPORT

SIX ROMAN CATHOLIC DOCTRINES THAT NULLIFY SALVATION BY GRACE

by Albert James Dager



INTRODUCTION

There are problems in dealing with doctrinal errors in any church or religious sect. Because one speaks out against error, he is often considered unloving toward those who hold those errors. That may be true in some instances. No doubt there are those who use their knowledge of the truth as an excuse to vent their wrath upon others with whom they find theological disagreement.

Besides the truth of one's words, one's motive for his actions is the all-important consideration in determining whether or not he is justified in his charges: "Though I have all knowledge and have not love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2).

The truth spoken in love—whether gently or harshly—is the only way to confront error. Though not all who hear the truth will recognize the love or accept the words, this does not diminish the service to God or man performed by those speaking the truth in love.

When zealousness overtakes good judgment it's difficult to make the truth sound as if it is being offered in love. No one likes criticism, and it is all the more unappealing when offered in words hard to receive. Yet there are times when only hard words can adequately express the truth. But no matter how the truth is presented, we always risk offending those who may not understand our motive or the truth itself.

As Galatians 4:16 asks, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"

One may ask as did Pontius Pilate, "What is truth?" For the Christian there is only one unimpeachable source: the Word of God, the Bible, understood with the mind of Christ—a mind humbly submitted to seeking the will of God and following it. All who seek the truth with that mind will find it (Matthew 7:7).

Because Roman Catholicism places its teaching authority and its traditions on an equal footing with Scripture in formulating its doctrines, it has fallen into great error. It has rejected the objective standard of God's Word in lieu of the subjective reasoning of man's religious spirit. Where there has been conflict between Scripture and tradition, Roman Catholicism has attempted to explain Scripture in a manner that subordinates it to tradition.

Among Roman Catholics today there is a searching for truth. And with that searching has come an awakening to the fact that one's salvation rests solely upon the shed blood of Jesus and His resurrection. There have always been those within the Roman Catholic Church who have recognized this truth and have attempted to bring it to light in spite of persecution from the political hierarchy. Perhaps they have not had a full grasp of the knowledge of the truth, having been indoctrinated in Romanism for all or most of their lives, but they have loved Jesus and have sought a closer walk with Him in the only way they knew.

This may even be said of some priests (and certainly of many nuns) who have not understood the full implications of certain doctrines of their church. We can be thankful that we are saved by grace and not by knowledge.

Yet with knowledge comes responsibility. Many Catholics, when presented with the truth, receive it and enter into the salvation provided by Christ. Some attempt for a time to remain in the Roman Catholic Church in the hope that they may reach others in that church with the truth. Sooner or later, however, as the full implications of the Roman Catholic Church's teachings dawn upon them, they are forced to make a choice: will they tolerate serious error that nullifies the grace of God, or will they leave in order to seek a more scriptural walk and enter into fellowship with true believers in Christ?

It is to non-Catholic Christians that I hope this writing will give a better understanding of why we cannot accept the Roman Catholic Church (that is, as a religious system) as one with which we may have unity. But it is also to those Catholics who are seeking the truth of God that it is offered as a means to bring better understanding of how certain teachings of their church nullify the doctrine of salvation by grace.

This particular writing deals with Roman Catholicism for specific reasons. That church's plea for unity has not been understood among Christians who are unaware

that unity with Rome must be on Rome's terms: submission to papal authority. Also, there is a trend among Christians to look favorably upon Roman Catholicism because it is perceived as intrinsically "Christian." It is reasoned that, since Roman Catholicism teaches the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, the sacrifice of the cross, the resurrection, and belief in an eternal hell, whatever else they teach isn't important—they are only minor errors that can be overlooked.

But the true implication of Roman Catholic teachings has escaped many Christians who are unaware of exactly what they contain. The issues at hand in this writing are certain doctrines—essential for all Roman Catholics to believe, and unchangeable—that effectively nullify the cardinal doctrine upon which the Christian faith is built: salvation by grace.

Careful analysis of Roman Catholic teaching demonstrates conclusively that that church limits in the hearts and minds of its adherents the saving power of Jesus' blood.

The six doctrines presented herein are by no means the only serious errors to which the Roman Catholic Church adheres. But they are six of the most serious errors which nullify the cardinal doctrine of salvation by grace. This analysis is offered with the earnest prayer that Roman Catholics who are searching for the truth will come to the realization that salvation rests solely upon the grace of God through the person of Jesus Christ alone, and not on any other mediator or mediatrix, nor on the merits of one's own works.

And while my hope is for Catholics to realize these truths, I also pray that all who call themselves "Christian" will realize them and come out from any church whose teachings nullify them. May all who call themselves Christians examine their own hearts and, with a better understanding, reach out to Catholics with the truth rather than acquiesce in the name of "ecumenism."

(Bible quotations are taken from the Roman Catholic St. Joseph's Edition of the New American Bible unless indicated otherwise)

PROLOGUE

When Jesus came to the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples this question: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptizer, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

"And you," he said to them, "who do you say that I am?"

"You are Messiah," Simon Peter answered, "the Son of the living God!" Jesus replied, "Blest are you, Simon son of Jonah! No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. I for my part declare to you, you are 'Rock,' and on this rock I will build my church, and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it. I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Then he strictly ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was Messiah. (Matthew 16:13-20)

Upon this passage of Scripture rest all the claims of the Roman Catholic Church as being the only true Church instituted by Christ. All Roman Catholic doctrine and its interpretation of Scripture and tradition likewise have their foundation in this single Bible passage. It is this singular portion of all the inspired writings which the Roman Catholic Church claims as the authority to make its laws and declare its doctrines which must be adhered to in order to be considered fully incorporated into the Body of Christ.

The Roman Catholic Church believes that when the Apostle Peter (Petros, lit., "Rock") was told by Jesus that upon this rock (petra, lit., "stone") he would build His ecclesia (called-out), Peter was given primacy over all the apostles and, subsequently, over the entire Body of Christ. He was proclaimed to be the first Pope; the Roman Catholic Church believes that all succeeding Popes are his successors.

According to The Catholic Encyclopedia published by Thomas Nelson Co., page 479:

The Pope is the Roman Pontiff who, by divine law, has supreme jurisdiction over the universal Church. He is the supreme superior of all religious. The Pope may act alone or with a council in de-

fining doctrine for the universal Church or in making laws. (cf. Infallibility). He is addressed as His Holiness the Pope. By title and right he is: Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman province, and Sovereign of the State of Vatican City. (Cf. Apostolic succession)

Vatican II teaches: "This Church (of Christ) constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in union with that Successor, although many elements of sanctification and truth can be found outside of her visible structure. These elements, however, as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, possess an inner dynamism toward Catholic unity" (LG8).

And: "In exercising supreme, full, and immediate power over the universal Church, the Roman Pontiff makes use of the departments of the Roman Curia. These, therefore, perform their duties in his name and with his authority, for the good of the Churches and in the service of the sacred pastors" (CD9).

The Pope thus has a genuine primacy of jurisdictional power, that is, a power connected with the primatial office itself as an essential, constitutive element.

Regarding the reason why Rome is the seat of the Roman Catholic Church, The Catholic Encyclopedia says, under the heading "ROME":

The capital city of today's Italy, the seat of the government, and principal city of the ancient Roman Empire, was inhabited as early as the eighth century B.C. After having spent some time in Jerusalem and Antioch, St. Peter journeyed to Rome in AD 42 and established the Church, making numerous converts and enduring the first-century persecutions. It is within the city of Rome, called the city of seven hills, that the entire area of Vatican State proper now is confined. By treaty with the Italian government certain other properties apart from the Vatican State are considered as territorial parts of the state of Vatican City.

Since the founding of the Church there by St. Peter, the city of Rome has been the center of Christendom. The city itself is the diocese of the Pope as bishop of Rome.

About the Pope and his relationship to Christians (both Roman Catholics and non-Catholics) the Roman Catholic Church holds the following doctrine to be true:

Hence we declare, affirm, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary for the salvation of every creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.

It must be understood that the doctrine of Papal Infallibility states that when a Pope is speaking officially on matters of faith or morals he is speaking infallibly and there is no possibility of error in his pronouncement.

This doctrine, stated by Pope Boniface VIII in 1302 through his encyclical, "Unam Sanctam," was considered doctrine as defined and pronounced officially. Since Roman Catholic doctrine cannot change (according to the Roman Catholic Church itself) then this doctrine must still be in effect.

Today this doctrine is ignored, or at best played down, because of the impact it can have upon non-Catholics; but we can't ignore the fact that it was declared doctrine and, no matter how it has been elaborated upon since, it still must be considered true by all Catholics. There is no salvation to anyone who is not subject to the Pope.

If this doctrine is not true, then neither can be the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. We would see immediately that Pope Boniface VIII made an error in his pronouncement of this doctrine. However, assuming that this doctrine is true, then how do we handle the following doctrine as defined by Vatican II:

The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter.

We can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them also He gives His gifts and graces, and is thereby operative among them with His sanctifying power.

There is a problem which we must honestly consider here. God's salvation doesn't fluctuate from century to century. What was necessary for salvation at the beginning is still necessary today and no amount of philosophizing can change that fact.

The issue here isn't whether non-Catholics can have salvation if they do not submit to the Pope. The issue is whether or not the Pope and/or the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church has a legitimate claim to infallibility in its proclamation of dogma.

Granted, this may seem like a small matter to most Christians of any denominational persuasion, but the importance can only be understood as one realizes the conflict in dogma which casts a shadow of question on the teaching authority of the Roman hierarchy. For if there is any question of the validity of that teaching authority then all of the stated dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church would have to be tested to see if they were, in fact, of God or not. The essential dogmas relating to salvation and the destiny of the human soul are especially crucial for consideration. There are several such dogmas as defined by the Roman Church which, if properly understood, nullify the biblical doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus' shed blood for the atonement of sin.

In an attempt to be as totally objective as possible, I have, in the following pages, followed a simple outline consideration of several doctrines as they are defined by the Roman Catholic Church. After naming a particular doctrine I have, wherever possible, stated the year it was defined, the source of its definition. As well, I have stated the Roman Catholic Church's basis for that definition—whether it be according to that church's interpretation of the Holy Scriptures or according to tradition. Then follows a verbatim quotation of the doctrine from a reliable source. All sources quoted are approved Roman Catholic publications which bear the imprimatur of authorized representatives of the Roman Catholic Church. The imprimatur, or "right to publish" is the Roman Church's means of protecting itself from spurious or forged

documents which purport to be official to that church when in fact they are not.

Roman Catholic Canon 1394 requires that when a work is printed, a notice of the grant of the permission (the "imprimatur") must be printed in that work. It is the simplest and most efficient way to acquaint the public with the fact that the permission was granted by an authoritative source within the Roman Catholic Church.

The Latin word "imprimatur" literally means "let it be printed," and is used by Roman Catholic Church authorities to extend permission for the printing of writings, prayers, pictures, and other material. The word is generally followed by the name of the ordinary (bishop, abbot, prelate, etc.) of the diocese in which the printing or publishing was done or where the author lives.

The imprimatur guarantees that the written work is free from any doctrinal or moral error as defined by the Roman Catholic Church.

In addition to doctrine which the Roman Catholic Church considers essential to belief in order to be considered a member of the true Body of Christ, I have also listed secondary teachings as well as rituals and traditions which the Roman Catholic Church holds sacred.

Following the stated doctrine I have listed Scriptural verses which can clearly be understood without any special knowledge of the Bible, by anyone who will read this work with an open heart. These Scriptural passages should prove valuable in ascertaining the validity of the questionable teachings.

Finally, there follows my own personal observations which, using the intelligence that the Lord gave me, along with a sincerity to learn the true nature of these doctrines, gives a logical explanation why I feel that the doctrine or teaching in question should not be held by a believer, or at least should not be held unquestionably as a prerequisite to membership in the Body of Christ.

It is my hope that those who read these pages will be ministered to in their spirits and that all, both Catholics and non-Catholics will come to a better understanding of God's work in and outside of the Roman Catholic Church.

INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE

- I DOGMA
- I DECLARED BY VATICAN COUNCIL I - AD 1870
- I BASIS FOR BELIEF: NONE
- I TIMES MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE: NONE

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES:

Definition:

Infallibility - In its Catholic doctrinal meaning, infallibility is the end result of divine assistance given the Church whereby she is preserved from the possibility and liability to error in teachings on matters of faith and morals. That infallibility was always present in the Church, even from apostolic times, is frequently affirmed by actions and declarations of the Apostles (Gal. 1:9) and spoken of by the fathers of the Church as the "charisma of truth" (St. Irenaeus). The doctrine of infallibility was defined by Vatican Council I (Sess. III, cap.4) and promulgated on July 18, 1870, the day before war broke out between Germany and France, which led indirectly to formal suspension of the Council three months later. The doctrine defines that infallibility is: (1) in the Pope personally and solely as the successor to St. Peter, (2) in an ecumenical council subject to confirmation by the Pope, (3) in the bishops of the Universal Church teaching definitively in union with the Pope. As such, infallibility does not extend to pronouncements on discipline and Church policy and by no means includes impeccability of the Pope or inerrancy in his private opinions. It is, briefly, the assured guarantee of the unfolding of the apostolic deposit of faith by authority of the Church whereby Christ's doctrine must and will be handed on by an infallible Church guided by the Holy Spirit. It is distinguished from both biblical inspiration and revelation. (The Catholic Encyclopedia, Nelson-p. 292)

Teachings:

Vatican II further teaches: "This is the infallibility which the Roman Pontiff, the head of the college of bishops, enjoys in virtue of his office, when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith, he proclaims by a definitive act some doctrine of

faith or morals. Therefore his definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly styled irreformable, for they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, an assistance promised to him in blessed Peter. Therefore they need no approval of others, nor do they allow an appeal to any other judgment" (LG 25).

And: "The Roman Pontiff is not pronouncing judgment as a private person. Rather as the supreme teacher of the universal Church, as one in whom the charisma of the infallibility of the Church herself is individually present, he is expounding or defending a doctrine of Catholic Faith" (LG 25).

And: "Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they can nevertheless proclaim Christ's doctrine infallibly. This is so, even when they are dispersed around the world, provided that while maintaining the bond of unity among themselves and with Peter's successor, and while teaching authentically on a matter of faith or morals, they concur in a single viewpoint as the one which must be held conclusively" (LG 25).

And: "This infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed His Church to be endowed in defining a doctrine of faith and morals extends as far as the deposit of divine revelation, which must be religiously guarded and faithfully expounded" (LG 25). (The Catholic Encyclopedia, Nelson - pp. 292-293)

Infallibility does not mean preservation from sin, which is impeccability. In apostolic times, St. Peter was infallible in the exercise of his office. But, unlike the Blessed Virgin, he was not impeccable, although it is commonly held that all the apostles were confirmed in grace on the day of Pentecost and thus preserved from losing the friendship of God.

Infallibility is not inspiration. Inspiration implies that God is the principal author of the word or work inspired, although using a human instrument; whereas infallibility is a providential aid, so that the human being who was helped (and not God) is the immediate author of an infallible statement. (The Catholic Catechism, Doubleday - p. 224)

CATHOLIC BIBLE REFERENCES:

Galatians 1:9:

I repeat what I have just said: if anyone preaches a gospel to you other than the one you received, let a curse be upon him!

COMMENTS ON CATHOLIC BIBLE REFERENCES:

The Apostle Paul, not Peter, wrote this epistle. And he was very careful to point out in the verse just previous to this one that even if he himself were to preach any other gospel than the one he had preached, he should be accursed.

Since the doctrine of papal infallibility is a doctrine, it must be believed by anyone who would remain in God's grace. But the simple gospel of Truth that Paul proclaimed had nothing to do with faith in any person other than Jesus Christ. If, in order to belong to the Body of Christ and, therefore, to be an heir of salvation, it is necessary to believe in the infallibility of a mere man, then faith in Christ's atonement isn't enough. Galatians 1:9 in no way affirms infallibility. On the contrary, the mere suggestion that the Apostle Paul could become apostate himself and bring another gospel later would be evidence that he, as the greatest teacher to the Gentiles, wasn't infallible.

Some might argue that he wasn't the Pope—Peter was. In the same book of the Bible and just in the next chapter (2) Paul relates how he had to rebuke Peter for his attitude towards the Gentile believers, treating them as inferior to the Jewish believers.

Scripture presents ample evidence that Peter was not the greatest authority in the early assembly. More often than anyone else, James is recorded as holding sway over the apostles in speaking authoritatively, and is given preeminence in the ministry of apostle (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; I Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; 2:9; 2:12). Even Paul was more prodigious in his teaching. Yet, as I have stated already, he admitted to the possibility that even he might be swayed from the truth and at a later time preach another gospel than the true gospel which had already been proclaimed.

The Gospel of Christ is the good news of salvation through faith in His redemptive work. To add doctrines to the already proclaimed doctrines of Scripture on the basis of their being recently revealed is to say that, as years pass, later generations must meet newer standards of belief than earlier generations. This is not reasonable, nor is it in conformance with God's own words that "I, the Lord, do not change" (Malachi 3:1).

In any case, this is hardly an adequate Scriptural basis for declaring so important a doctrine that would permit complete control of the thinking of billions of people down through the ages.

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO REFUTE THE DOCTRINE OF THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE:

James 3:13-17:

If one of you is wise and understanding, let him show this in practice through a humility filled with good sense. Should you instead nurse bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, at least refrain from arrogant and false claims against the truth. Wisdom like this does not come from above. It is earthbound, a kind of animal, even devilish, cunning. Where there are jealousy and strife, there also are inconstancy and all kinds of vile behavior. Wisdom from above, by contrast, is first of all innocent. It is also peaceable, lenient, docile, rich in sympathy and the kindly deeds that are its fruits, impartial and sincere.

James 1:5:

If any of you is without wisdom, let him ask it from the God who gives generously and ungrudgingly to all, and it will be given him.

FINAL COMMENT

While the Scriptures quoted above don't actually refute the doctrine of infallibility in so many words, they prove that God's wisdom is available to all who will ask in faith believing. Actually, it is possible for any person to be infallible at any point in time when he is being led by the Holy Spirit in what he says. This is what is known as speaking prophetically. Yet anything spoken in the name of the Lord must agree with Scripture. There

are no new revelations that bind the believer apart from the Bible.

What I wish to point out in using these verses from the Epistle of James is that, according to them, there must have been some Popes who were not infallible because their actions betrayed a lack of wisdom and faith. It isn't my purpose to rehash all of the old accusations against former papal authorities who committed all sorts of atrocities in the interest of power. The Roman Catholic Church is well aware of them and, at least as far as the hierarchy of today is concerned, they are looked upon as unfortunate circumstances of the past.

But those atrocities prove that the Popes responsible for them were incapable of exercising proper faith and wisdom. Even later on in his Epistle James makes the comment that "faith without good works is dead." Dead faith can hardly produce infallibility in judgment. Even though the Roman Catholic Church may honestly state that infallibility does not mean impeccability, it nevertheless must be remembered that God will not impart His grace to evildoers.

The question of infallibility isn't even dealt with in Scripture. A doctrine so important as this should be expected to be stated in the writings of the Apostles, since they covered everything else that was necessary for belief.

When the Roman Catholic Church says that the Pope's definitions are irreformable and therefore need no approval of others, nor do they allow an appeal to any other judgment, she is placing the Body of Christ at the mercy of the personal whims of a single human being or, in some cases, the magisterium with the approval of that single human being.

The word "irreformable" means "beyond the possibility of being reformed." It implies that no change is ever possible. Yet, there are countless instances of changes in Roman Catholic teaching. Remember now that infallibility applies to all teachings on faith and morals when the Pope is speaking officially. This must then apply to all Church laws which can affect the eternal destiny of believers.

When Roman Catholicism in just the past couple of decades taught that, if a Catholic were to eat meat on Friday and die without confessing it to a priest he would go to Hell, it was certainly speaking on a matter of faith and morals combined. According to Catholic law, it was a mortal sin worthy of eternal damnation to eat a piece of meat on Friday. This depended, of course, on what part of the world you lived in or what rite you adhered to (Eastern or Western).

Roman Catholic claims to the contrary, infallibility, by definition of relating to all proclamations having to do with faith and morals, extends to the laws of the church, not only to the doctrines of the church. And, since the Roman Catholic Church insists that no decree spoken with infallibility can be changed, it is only logical to assume that, when those laws were changed regarding the eternal destiny of a soul because of some alleged sin, the irreformable theory can only be held invalid.

This concept of infallibility must be tested then against any changes in Roman Catholic Church law whereby the eternal destiny of the believer is altered simply because all such laws pertain to morality as defined by the church at a given moment in time. The doctrine of infallibility does not allow for any such changes. Yet no Catholic will deny that such changes have taken place. Remember now, that these changes I am speaking about are only relative to laws that affect the eternal destiny of the soul; not the laws of ritual or any other inconsequential rules. The Roman Catholic Church rightfully omits those laws from consideration of infallibility.

It isn't that the Pope cannot be infallible that is the issue. It is that only the Pope can be infallible; and that he is infallible on his own merit apart from inspiration by the Holy Spirit. On one hand, it is to say that it's because of the Holy Spirit that the Pope is infallible, and on the other hand that the Pope, not God, is the author of infallibility.

This contradiction must be dealt with honestly because it is a definite allusion to the possibility of supernatural power being the property of a human being without crediting God's help. I'm sure most

Roman Catholics would deny such a teaching. Yet according to Vatican II (LG25) this is true (The Catholic Encyclopedia, pp. 292-293).

Finally, without belaboring the point, I refer you to the Prologue of this writing to refresh your memory on the teaching of Boniface VIII that, without submission to the Roman Pontiff there can be no salvation. That was Roman Catholic doctrine which, according to the church, cannot change. Yet, Vatican II has recently overridden that doctrine and said that non-Catholics who are baptized, and even non-Christians, can have salvation even though they do not have the fulness of the faith for not having submitted to the authority of the Pope.

As I said, I don't wish to belabor the point and I feel that this evidence is sufficient to refute any such teaching that the Roman Pontiff is the only source of God's revelation which can be considered infallible.

The fact is that God will reveal His truth to any of His children who are obedient and seeking with an honest heart. But that truth will always be based upon His unchanging Word and can never be contradictory to that Word.

Every Christian must hold to John's warning in I John 4:

Beloved, do not trust every spirit, but put the spirits to a test to see if they belong to God, because many false prophets have appeared in the world. This is how you can recognize God's Spirit: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God, while every spirit that fails to acknowledge him does not belong to God.

This seems simple enough until one realizes that there are many false teachers today who acknowledge that the man Jesus did live almost two thousand years ago in the flesh. But the word "Christ" or "Anointed One," (Greek) is the same as the Hebrew "Messiah." It is in this name that the fullness of Jesus' nature and mission on earth are contained. Anyone speaking through the Spirit of God will acknowledge that Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, came in the flesh to do the will of His Father. That will was to die through the shedding of His blood, then rise again bodily. One must

trust in all these and live in obedience to God's Word in order to have the true Jesus Christ. To add to this Gospel actually diminishes it.

But there is more to it that even this. Since the Messiah is the Word of God (John 1) who became flesh, He must necessarily be God Himself and, therefore, unchangeable (Malachi 3:1). Since the Word of God does not change, then the manifestation of that Word through His written, inspired Word is unchangeable. Consequently, any teaching which is not in conformity to the written Word of God, or which adds to or subtracts from that written Word, is not of the Spirit of God.

Therefore, the laws of the Roman Catholic Church which put conditions for salvation upon the individual, other than what the written Word of God puts upon them (namely, justification by faith in Christ alone), are invalid laws. Therefore, regardless of the claim of infallibility in proclaiming those laws, they need not be adhered to. It's especially an imposition upon the individual to say that, depending upon when in history or where on the face of the earth he happens to live, his adherence to those laws will determine whether he may inherit the promise that God has for him. All we need do is obey the laws according to faith in Christ as already revealed in the written Word, the Bible. If we add anything to the work already done by Christ on the cross in terms of salvation, we err.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

- I DOGMA
- I BASIS FOR BELIEF: TRADITION
- I TIMES MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE: NONE

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES:

Definition:

The Sacrifice of the Mass is really the holy and living representation and at the same time the unbloody and efficacious oblation of the Lord's Passion and that blood-stained sacrifice which was offered for us on the cross. (The Catholic Encyclopedia, Nelson - p. 375)

Teachings:

Christ's own association of what he did at the Last Supper

with what he was to do on Good Friday has been the Church's own norm for intimately relating the two. The sacrifice of the altar, then, is no mere empty commemoraton of Calvary, but a true and proper act of sacrifice, whereby Christ the high priest by an unbloody immolation offers himself a most acceptable victim to the eternal Father, as he did on the cross. "It is one and the same victim; the same person now offers it by the ministry of his priests, who then offered himself on the cross. Only the manner of offering is different."

The priest is the same, namely, Jesus Christ, whose divine person the human minister represents at the altar. "By reason of his ordination, he is made like the high priest and possesses the power of performing actions in virtue of Christ's very person." (Canon 9)

The victim is also the same, namely, the Savior in his human nature with his true body and blood. Worth stressing is that what makes the Mass a sacrifice is that Christ is a living human being with a human will, still capable of offering (hence priest) and being offered (hence victim), no less truly today than occurred on the cross. (The Catholic Catechism, Doubleday - pp. 465, 466)

CATHOLIC BIBLE REFERENCES

Matthew 26:26-28:

During the meal Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. "Take this and eat it," he said, "this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them. "All of you must drink from it," he said, "for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins."

Mark 14:22-24:

During the meal he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. "Take this," he said, "this is my body." He likewise took a cup, gave thanks and passed it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them: "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out on behalf of many."

Luke 22:19,20:

Then, taking bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying: "This is my body to be given for you. Do this as a remembrance of me."

He did the same with the cup after eating, saying as he did so: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you."

I Corinthians 11:23-26:

I received from the Lord what I handed on to you, namely, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread, and after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes!

I Corinthians 10:16,17:

Is not the cup of blessing we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, many though we are, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

COMMENTS ON CATHOLIC BIBLE REFERENCES:

All of these Scriptures say pretty much the same thing and they all relate to the last supper activity and the words of Jesus. There are no other Scriptures upon which the Roman Catholic Church bases so important a doctrine as this, that the Mass is the actual sacrifice of the cross being reenacted in an unbloody manner—not merely a symbolic reenactment of that sacrifice—being offered through the priest.

The question arises as to why such a sacrifice is necessary. If Jesus' death on the Cross was a fulfillment of His role as sacrificial Lamb for the penalty and guilt of sin, why do we need further sacrifices?

That question can best be answered by Scripture itself, taking into consideration that nowhere in the Bible is such a continuing sacrifice spoken of. Quite the contrary, as we shall see.

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO REFUTE THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

Hebrews 7:22-27:

Thus has Jesus become the guarantee of a better covenant. Under the old covenant there were many priests because they were prevented by death

from remaining in office; but Jesus, because he remains forever, has a priesthood which does not pass away. Therefore he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he forever lives to make intercession for them.

It was fitting that we should have such a high priest: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, higher than the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifice day after day, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did that once for all when he offered himself.

Hebrews 9:11-15:

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things which have come to be, he entered once for all into the sanctuary, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation. He entered, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, and achieved eternal redemption.

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself up unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God!

Hebrews 9:24-28:

For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands, a mere copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself that he might appear before God now on our behalf. Not that he might offer himself there again and again, as the high priest enters year after year into the sanctuary with blood that is not his own; if that were so, he would have had to suffer death over and over from the creation of the world. But now he has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sins once for all by his sacrifice. Just as it is appointed that men die once, and after death be judged, so Christ was offered up once to take away the sins of many; he will appear a second time not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

Hebrews 10:10-20:

By this "will," (of God) we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every other priest stands ministering day by day, and offering again and

again those same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins and took his seat forever at the right hand of God; now he waits until his enemies are placed beneath his feet. By one offering he has forever perfected those who are being sanctified. The Holy Spirit attests this to us, for after saying, "This is the covenant I will make with them after those days says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts and I will write them on their minds," he also says, "Their sins and their transgressions I will remember no more." Once these have been forgiven, there is no further offering for sin.

FINAL COMMENT:

The writer of Hebrews was very careful to reiterate several times, the lack of need for continual sacrifices. This particular letter was written to the Hebrew Christians because they needed to be reassured that the previous sacrifices of animals were no longer necessary. He pointed out that once Jesus paid the price for our sins there was no other price to be paid; by the Lord (as priest) or by anyone else.

As our high priest today He performs the function of mediating for us before the throne of God as we come to Him in simple faith, accepting what He has done for us. Why do we need to attach provisions to His wonderful grace? The Bible speaks so plainly here, why argue against it?

There is a more crucial matter to be considered here. Every time the "sacrifice" of the Mass is being offered it is a denial of the finished work of the Cross. To say that Jesus must be offered up to God thousands of times every day, all over the world, is to nullify a professed belief in the sacrifice on Calvary. It is saying that Jesus' actual death on the cross is no more than a dry-run for all those that follow on the altars of Roman Catholic churches everywhere. Roman Catholic claims to the contrary, it says that the Lord's actual death wasn't enough.

Please, dear reader, don't close your mind to this. I realize that these pages don't contain pleasant reading for you if you consider yourself a devout Catholic as I once did. But there is so much at stake here.

God wants us to come to Him in simple faith, accepting His word as the basis for that faith. When the traditions and philosophies of men encroach upon the simply stated truths contained in Scripture, the issues cannot help but become clouded.

This is why I urge you to search the Scriptures diligently to test the things that are written here. Don't take any man's word for God's truth no matter how impressive his titles and seminary training might be. No one is infallible when it comes to stated truth other than when he is led by the Holy Spirit. But how can one know if the Holy Spirit is behind the one speaking unless one tests the teaching against the written Word of God which was given to us for that purpose?

You must even test my words. In fact, I earnestly implore you to do so. Realize this, however: everyone who has the Spirit of God in him has the ability to decipher truth from error if his heart is truly open to God to receive instruction.

The first question you must ask yourself, if you are honest, is: do I have the Spirit of God living in me? If you don't know the answer to this question, then the chances are that you don't.

If you wish to know the truth in all these matters and you also wish to draw closer to God, then it is necessary that you accept His sacrifice on the cross as the full and complete atonement for your sins. Repent, once and for all, of your sins and ask the Lord to give you His Holy Spirit so that you can be assured of eternal life. It is His Spirit living in us that quickens our spirits and makes them alive to God.

From that point on it's a matter of living daily for Him and searching the Scriptures to learn His will for your own life.

There is freedom in Christ which has been denied us all as long as we remain subject to the dictates of men who impose upon us the restriction of religious tradition.

Consider this: You must do more than believe that God's truths are real. You must accept them for yourself personally. As the Apostle James said, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well:

the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19 KJV).

Do you believe? You do well. But the devils also believe and they tremble.

To know about God is one thing; to know Him personally is quite another thing. One may say that he knows about the wealthiest man in all the world, but until he is adopted by that man as an heir, he cannot really appropriate the benefits of being a son. God has offered us a way to enter into His blessings by providing a one-time sacrifice for all of our transgressions. When we speak of grace we know that we are speaking of God's unmerited favor. Therefore, if salvation is by grace, what can we do to earn it? None of us can pay the price of so great a gift.

But God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Believe it. Accept it. And bear with me as we carry on.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

- I DOGMA
- I DECLARED BY POPE INNOCENT III - AD 1215
- I BASIS FOR BELIEF: TRADITION & INTERPRETATION OF MARK 14:22-25
- I TIMES MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE: NONE

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES:

Definition:

Transubstantiation; "The way Christ is made present in this sacrament (Holy Eucharist) is none other than by the change of the whole substance of the bread into His Body, and of the whole substance of the wine into His Blood (in the Consecration at Mass)...this unique and wonderful change the Catholic Church rightfully calls transubstantiation." (encyclical "Mysterium Fidei" of Paul VI, Sept. 3, 1965). The first official use of the term was made by the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215. Authoritative teaching on the subject was issued by the Council of Trent. (1979 Catholic Almanac - p. 387)

Teachings:

When Catholic Christianity affirms, without qualification, that "in the nourishing sacrament of

the Holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man," is present "under the appearances of those sensible things," it rests its faith on the words of Scripture and the evidence of Sacred Tradition. (The Catholic Catechism, Doubleday - page 458)

The first serious ripples of controversy came in the ninth century, when a monk from the French Abbey of Corbie wrote against his abbot, St. Paschasius (785-860). Ratramnus (d.868) held that Christ's body in the Eucharist cannot be the same as Christ's historical body once on earth and now in heaven because the Eucharistic body is invisible, impalpable, and spiritual. He wanted to hold on to the Real Presence but stressed the Eucharist as symbolic rather than corporeal. His book on the subject was condemned by the Synod of Vercelli, and his ideas, it is held, influenced all subsequent theories that contradicted the traditional teaching of the Church.

Within two centuries the issue had reached such a point of gravity that a formal declaration was evoked from the Holy See. In 1079, Archdeacon Berengar of Tours who favored Ratramnus' position and wrote against what he considered the excessive realism of Paschasius, was required by (Pope) Gregory VII to accept the following declaration of faith in the Eucharistic presence:

I believe in my heart and openly profess that the bread and wine placed upon the altar are, by the mystery of the sacred prayer and the words of the Redeemer, substantially changed into the true and life-giving flesh and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord, and that after the consecration, there is present the true body of Christ which was born of the Virgin and, offered up for the salvation of the world, hung on the cross and now sits at the right hand of the Father, and that there is present the true blood of Christ which flowed from his side. They are present not only by means of a sign and of the efficacy of the sacrament, but also in the very reality and truth of their nature and substance. (The Catholic Catechism, Doubleday - page 461)

Responding to the claims of merely symbolic or spiritual presence, the Church condemned "anyone who denies that the body

and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, but says that Christ is present in the sacrament only as a sign, or figure, or by his power."

The expression "whole Christ" proved to be decisive. Since the whole Christ is present in the fullness of his divine and human natures, this implies that he is present under the sacramental appearances with the totality of his divine attributes as well as his human properties. He is therefore in the Eucharist also with the essence of those dimensional features that we commonly associate with a living human being. The explanation of how these physical properties are possible is part of theological speculation but the fact is a matter of faith. (The Catholic Catechism, Doubleday - p. 462

There was no dependence on Aristotelian philosophy in the Church's use of words like "substance" or "transubstantiation." Long before either term had become commonplace in the West, the East spoke regularly of the *ousia* or being of the bread and wine, which were changed into the *ousia* or being of Christ. That which constitutes bread and wine, in virtue of the sacramental consecration, ceased to be bread and wine and became the reality of the whole Christ. What alone remained were the species, i.e., appearances or external properties of what looked and tasted like bread and wine but were now the living body and blood of the Savior.

Given this perdurance of Christ's presence as long as the species remain, it was only logical for the Church to worship the Blessed Sacrament as it would the person of Jesus himself. As a result, he is to be adored "in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist with the worship of latria, including the external worship." Concretely this means that the Blessed Sacrament is to be "honored with extraordinary festive celebrations" and "solemnly carried from place to place" and "is to be publicly exposed for the people's adoration." (Council of Trent - Canons 1 & 3) (The Catholic Catechism, Doubleday - pp. 462-463

CATHOLIC BIBLE REFERENCES:

Mark 14:22-25:

During the meal he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. "Take this," he said, "this is my body." He likewise took a cup, gave thanks and passed it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them: "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out on behalf of many. I solemnly assure you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the reign of God."

John 6:48-58:

I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, but they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven for a man to eat and never die. I myself am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever; the bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world."

At this the Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" Thereupon Jesus said to them: "Let me solemnly assure you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood real drink. The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the Father who has life sent me and I have life because of the Father, so the man who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and died nonetheless, the man who feeds on this bread shall live forever." He said this in a synagogue instruction at Capernaum.

COMMENTS ON CATHOLIC BIBLE REFERENCES:

The best thing to share here is to point out the continuation of the Gospel of John discourse on the Lord being the bread from heaven. In the very next verses we read:

After hearing his words, many of his disciples remarked, 'This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?'

Jesus was fully aware that his disciples were murmuring in protest at what he had said. "Does it shake your faith?" he asked them.

"What then, if you were to see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before...? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words I spoke to you are spirit and life."

Jesus Himself stated that He was speaking in a spiritual sense; that we must eat of Him spiritually not physically, because the flesh itself is worthless. Yet, we see how the previous verses were taken out of context and an important doctrine built upon them even to the point of stating that the Roman Catholic Church condemns anyone who does not agree with their interpretation.

Let's be totally objective here because, if one uses a particular rule of interpretation to state that the Lord is speaking literally in a specific verse of Scripture, then he must use the same rule of interpretation for the rest of that verse. That's only logical and fair to the Scripture itself.

It is obvious that Jesus, when He said, "This is my body" did not say "This has become my body." Since He was in His body at the time He said it, then He couldn't have been in the piece of bread. And since His blood was flowing through His veins, it couldn't be in the cup. If we were to apply such a definition absolutely, then we must take the rest of His statement in the same manner. In Luke 22:20, the same event is described in more detail and the words are repeated almost verbatim in I Corinthians 11:25:

He did the same with the cup after eating, saying as He did so: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.

Using this more complete account of what the Lord said, we ask the question, "Was the bread His body?" Therefore we may honestly ask, "Was the cup the new covenant?" If so, what happened to this new covenant when the cup was lost? Without that cup, we have no new covenant. Of course, the cup was symbolic of the new covenant which would be ushered in after the Lord spilled His blood for our redemption and, by His resurrection, opened the door for full fellowship with God as before the fall of Adam.

We must likewise apply the rule of consistency to the verses that re-

call the Lord's words about His being the living bread. Now, consider for a moment: Was the Lord a piece of bread at the time He made that statement? Which will it be? Is Jesus bread, or is a piece of bread Jesus? According to this reference which the Church uses to teach transubstantiation, the Lord was bread. Therefore, His disciples could have bitten into Him and swallowed a piece of bread. Ridiculous? Of course.

But He said it and if it were to be taken literally instead of spiritually then we can just as easily conclude that His flesh was made of dough as we can conclude that a piece of dough is His flesh.

We must also then consider that Jesus was a rock, a tree, a vine, a star, etc., for there are many passages of Scripture which speak of Him in those terms and even by His own words.

If you are a Roman Catholic I urge you not to close your eyes to this very important point. The reason will follow.

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO REFUTE THE DOCTRINE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION:

John 6:59-63

Quoted above.

Luke 22:18:

I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the coming of the reign of God.

FINAL COMMENT:

When Jesus said that He wouldn't drink of the fruit of the vine again until the kingdom of God was established, He acknowledged that it was still wine that was in the cup because that is what the fruit of the vine is. It isn't blood. The substance was unchanged after He had pronounced His "consecration."

Now, why is it so serious to consider the Roman Catholic sacrament of the Holy Eucharist as unworthy of participation by true Christians? In light of Roman Catholic teachings that it must be worshipped even as the Lord Jesus Himself is worshipped, it must be classed as idolatry.

Why do I use such strong words? Because, if we really analyze this doctrine aside from traditional

teachings of Roman Catholicism, we will see that it is telling us that a piece of bread is actually God.

Before we throw that off as nonsense, remember that Roman Catholicism also justifies its position on Mary as the Mother of God on the basis that Jesus is God and she is His mother—therefore she is the Mother of God. It is no more unreasonable to use the same rationale to assume then that the piece of bread is God if it is, according to Roman Catholic teaching, the very person of Jesus Christ.

Remember too, that "anyone who denies it as the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ" stands condemned. This means that all Christians who are not Roman Catholics are damned because they don't accept this teaching. It, in itself, is a contradiction of the stand of Vatican II on the position of non-Catholic Christians.

Because the concept of "transubstantiation" is essential to the sacrifice of the Mass, the two are unalterably linked together and, should one be found false then they must both be found false. That being the case, even the concept of "transubstantiation," if it is adhered to, nullifies the professed faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ on the Cross. It too, as does the Mass, tells us that that atonement wasn't enough. To say such is to deny the essential doctrine of atonement. This is true regardless of whether or not one states that belief. Can I say that I have accepted the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross for my sins in a true sense if I still hold reservations about needing to add my own works through vicariously offering sacrifices to supplement the original sacrifice? Of course not.

PURGATORY

- I DOGMA
- I PROPOSED BY POPE GREGORY I - AD 593
- I DECLARED DOGMA BY THE COUNCIL OF FLORENCE - AD 1439
- I TIMES MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE: NONE

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES:

Definition:

Purgatory - The state or condition in which those who have died in the state of grace, but with some attachment to sin, suffer for a time before they are admitted to the glory and happiness of heaven. In this state and period of passive suffering, they are purified of unrepented venial sins, satisfy the demands of divine justice for temporal punishment due for sins, and are thus converted to a state of worthiness of the beatific vision. (1979 Catholic Almanac - p. 379)

Teachings:

Catholicism believes there is still the prospect for expiation (not repentance) called purgatory because its function is to purify those who die in God's friendship but are not fully cleansed of the effects of their sins. (The Catholic Catechism, Doubleday - p. 254)

The Benedictine constitution states that "We, with our apostolic authority, make the following definition," and then goes on to declare that the souls of the just, who die in God's friendship, "soon after death and, in the case of those who need it, after purification, have been, are, and will be in heaven." (The Catholic Catechism, Doubleday - page 257)

If those who are truly repentant die in charity before they have done sufficient penance for their sins of omission and commission, their souls are cleansed after death in purgatorial or cleansing punishments.

The suffrages of the faithful on earth can be of great help in relieving these punishments, as for instance, the Sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, almsgiving, and other religious deeds which, in the manner of the Church, the faithful are accustomed to offer for others of the faithful. (Decree - 2nd Council of Lyons - AD 1274)

CATHOLIC BIBLE REFERENCES:

2nd Maccabees 12:41-45 (Old Testament Apocryphal book):

All then blessed the ways of the Lord, the just judge who brings hidden things to light, and gave themselves to prayer, begging that the sin committed might be fully blotted out. Next, the valiant Judas urged the people to keep themselves free from all sin, having seen with their own eyes

the effect of the sin on those who had fallen.

After this he took a collection from them individually amounting to nearly two thousand drachmae, and sent it to Jerusalem to have a sacrifice for sin offered, an altogether fine and noble action, in which he took full account of the resurrection. For if he had not expected the fallen to rise again it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. Whereas if he had in view the splendid recompense for those who make a pious end, the thought was holy and devout. This is why he had this atonement sacrifice offered for the dead, so that they might be released from their sin.

(Matthew 12:32):

Whoever says anything against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever says anything against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come.

I Corinthians 3:10-15

Thanks to the favor God showed me I laid a foundation as a wise master-builder might do, and now someone else is building upon it. Everyone, however, must be careful how he builds. No one can lay a foundation other than the one that has been laid, namely Jesus Christ. If different ones build on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or straw, the work of each will be made clear. The Day will disclose it. That day will make its appearance with fire, and fire will test the quality of each man's work. If the building a man has raised on this foundation still stands, he will receive his recompense; if a man's building burns, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as one fleeing through fire.

COMMENTS ON CATHOLIC BIBLE REFERENCES:

2nd Maccabees 12:41-45:

The Book of Maccabees is a portion of the apocryphal books which are held to be inspired Scripture only by the Roman Catholic Church as part of their Old Testament. They were never recognized as the inspired Scriptures by the Jewish theologians of old, and they are the only books never referred to by any of the New Testament writers or by any person spoken of in the New Testament.

Even if they could be proven to be the inspired Word of God (which they cannot), they would still be part of the Old Covenant dispensation and, since Jesus, through His death, burial and resurrection, put an end to the curse of sin for all believers, the destiny of the souls of the faithful departed has been altered from those who merely had the hope of the first resurrection along with the Messiah (Jesus).

Remember Jesus' testimony of Lazarus and the rich man in hades; Lazarus was in "Abraham's bosom" awaiting the resurrection with Jesus. Now, Scripture says, to be with Christ is far better than to continue living on earth (Philippians 1:23). Which would you rather believe—that when you die you must face torture for your sins, or that Jesus paid it all for you and you will be immediately in His presence at the time of death? The Roman Catholic Church offers you purgatory and an endless agonizing on the part of your loved ones who must do penance and pay indulgences in order to get you out. The Bible offers you immediate bliss in the presence of the Lord. Which is telling the truth?

Matthew 12:32:

This Scripture can only be emphasizing the severity of sinning against God's Holy Spirit. Even the Catholic Church teaches that sins cannot be forgiven after death. Purgatory is supposed to cleanse only from the penalty of death due to sins already forgiven. When Jesus said "either in this age or in the age to come" the key word is "age." He didn't say either in this life or after death. This age is the age of grace whereby we are forgiven as a result of our faith in the atoning work of the Cross. The next age will be the millennial reign of Christ whereby He, along with His saints, will rule the nations with a rod of iron. During that age, as even now, the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

To quote this Scripture as "proof" of purgatory is illogical and contradictory.

I Corinthians 3:10-15:

This passage speaks of the value of our works for rewards. It is the quality of our work which will be tried as by fire, not we ourselves. Our trial is on earth to see if we will live righteously before God.

According to this Scripture, all that we have built, if it is on any weak foundation, will be burned. It says nothing of punishment but only that whatever is not done for Christ will be destroyed.

The Day (capital D) is the name commonly given in Scripture for the Great Day of the Lord which will be the time of His coming again to the earth in order to restore it unto Himself. At that time all the works of men will be judged whether they are acceptable to God or not. If they are found to be wanting in their quality they will not stand for rewards but will be as chaff to be burned up. Even though all the works of a man may be burned, the man himself may be saved if he has the covering of the blood of Jesus Christ and His worthiness according to faith.

He will stand destitute of rewards though, as one fleeing through a fire and losing all of his possessions.

To use this Scripture as a proof text for the belief in purgatory is to say that the Day of the Lord—not today—is when purgatory (testing by fire) will be in effect. This is not what the Roman Catholic Church teaches. It teaches that purgatory is real today.

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO REFUTE THE DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY:

The following Scriptures tell us of the confidence we have in the complete atonement for our sins by Jesus Christ. They offer proof that, once our sins are forgiven, they are never remembered by God.

Psalms 103:12,13:

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he put our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

I John 1:9:

But if we acknowledge our sins, he who is just can be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrong.

Romans 8:1:

There is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Acts 13:38,39:

You must realize, my brothers, that it is through him (Jesus) that the forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you, including the remission of all those charges you could never be acquitted of under the law of Moses. In him every believer is acquitted.

Romans 3:21-28

But now the justice of God has been manifested apart from the law, even though both law and prophets bear witness to it—that justice of God which works through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. All men have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. All men are now undeservedly justified by the gift of God, through the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus. Through his blood, God made him the means of expiation for all who believe. He did so to manifest his own justice, for the sake of remitting sins committed in the past—to manifest his justice in the present, by way of forbearance, so that he might be just and might justify those who believe in Jesus.

What occasion is there for boasting? It is ruled out. By what law, the law of works? Not at all! By the law of faith. For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from observance of the law.

Romans 5:1-2:

Now that we have been justified by faith, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have gained access by faith to the grace in which we now stand, and we boast of our hope for the glory of God.

Romans 5:9:

Now that we have been justified by his blood, it is all the more certain that we shall be saved by him from God's wrath.

Romans 5:15-19:

But the gift is not like the offense. For if by the offense of the one man (Adam) all died, much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man, Jesus Christ abound for all. The gift is entirely different from the sin committed by the one man. In the first case, the sentence followed upon one offense and brought condemnation, but in the second, the gift came after many offenses and brought acquittal. If death began its reign through one man because of his of-

fense, much more shall those who receive the overflowing grace and gift of justice live and reign through the one man, Jesus Christ.

To sum it up, then: just as a single offense brought condemnation to all men, a single righteous act brought all men acquittal and life. Just as through one man's disobedience all became sinners, so through one man's obedience all shall become just.

Titus 3:5-8:

But when the kindness and love of God our saviour appeared, he saved us; not because of any righteous deeds we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the baptism of the new birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he lavished on us through Jesus Christ our saviour, that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs, in hope, of eternal life. You can depend on this to be true.

Philippians 1:21,23:

For, to me, "life" means Christ; hence dying is so much gain.

I am strongly attracted to both: I long to be freed from this life and to be with Christ, for that is the far better thing.

Hebrews 10:14-18:

By one offering he [Jesus] has forever perfected those who are being sanctified. The Holy Spirit attests this to us, for after saying, "This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts and I will write them on their minds," he also says, "Their sins and their transgressions I will remember no more."

Once these have been forgiven, there is no further offering for sin.

See also Hebrews 7:22-27; 9:11-15; 24-28.

FINAL COMMENT:

This doctrine of a place called "Purgatory" rests heavily upon tradition which, I realize, the Roman Catholic Church places on an equal level with the Scriptures. The problem with this doctrine, however, is that it actually nullifies the professed belief in the atoning work of the Cross.

It says that Jesus suffered, bled and died a cruel death for our sins, but that His sacrifice wasn't enough. The punishment for those sins must still be dealt with by horrible suffering akin to a temporary lake of fire.

To profess belief in Purgatory is to cast scorn upon the Lord's sacrifice which was a perfect offering to satisfy God's justice.

Was it a perfect sacrifice, or wasn't it?

What you choose to believe is your responsibility. Whether or not you accept His atonement (payment, full and complete) for your sins will determine whether or not you have any forgiveness at all.

I don't ask you to accept my determination on the matter. What I do ask is that you search the Scriptures with an open heart and devoid of human traditions which could cloud proper understanding.

MARY'S IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

I DOGMA DECLARED BY POPE PIUS IX - AD 1854

I BASIS FOR BELIEF: TRADITION

I TIMES MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE: NONE

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES:

Definition:

Immaculate conception - This is the privilege and the singular grace that divine omnipotence bestowed upon the Blessed Virgin Mary to preserve her from original sin by infusing into her soul sanctifying grace from the very instant of conception in the womb of her mother, St. Anne. Through this, Mary, who was to be the Blessed Mother of the Son of God, was conceived in the state of holiness and justice. This effect, caused by the act of God, resulted in her being free of the consequences of original sin, such as the slavery to the devil, subjection to concupiscence, and darkness of the intellect. Further, Mary was not subject to the law of suffering and death, which are penalties of the sin of human nature, even though she knew these, experienced them, and endured them for our salvation. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was defined for the Universal Church's belief by Pius IX, Dec. 8, 1854, as follows: "We declare, announce, and define that the doctrine which states that the Blessed Virgin Mary was preserved, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of God Omnipotent and because of the merits of Jesus Christ the Savior of the human race, free from

all stain of original sin, is revealed by God and must be believed firmly and with constancy by all the faithful." (The Catholic Encyclopedia, Nelson - p. 285, emphasis ours)

Teachings:

The sinlessness of Christ's mother has been recognized from the beginning, but was little dwelled upon except in the writings of the Greek and Latin Fathers when they described her perfect holiness and compared her with the first woman, Eve. They spoke of her as "holy, innocent, most pure, inviolate, undefiled, immaculate," in a way that left no doubt they considered her absolutely without sin. (The Catholic Catechism, Doubleday - page 151)

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO REFUTE THE DOCTRINE OF THE MARY'S IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Romans 3:23-25:

All men have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. All men are now undeservedly justified by the gift of God, through the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus. Through his blood, God made him the means of expiation for all who believe.

Luke 11:27,28:

When he was saying this a woman from the crowd called out, "Blest is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!" "Rather," he replied, "blest are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

Matthew 11:11:

I solemnly assure you, history has not known a man born of woman greater than John the Baptist. Yet the least born into the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Luke 1:46,47:

Then Mary said: "My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit finds joy in God my savior..."

Matthew 12:46-50:

He was still addressing the crowds when his mother and his brothers appeared outside to speak with him. Someone said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are standing out there and they wish to speak to you." He said to the one who had told him, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Then, extending his hand toward

his disciples, he said, "There are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to me."

Luke 2:48-50:

When his parents saw him they were astonished, and his mother said to him: "Son, why have you done this to us? You see that your father and I have been searching for you in sorrow." He said to them: "Why did you search for me? Did you not know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not grasp what he said to them.

COMMENT:

According to the Pope (Pius IX) who defined this doctrine, every member of the Roman Catholic Church must believe it firmly and with constancy (firmness of mind without deviation). This means, by its very definition that, unless one holds to this doctrine which cannot be supported by Scripture, one cannot be a member in good standing of the Body of Christ. Combining this with the other teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, it becomes impossible to attain salvation because one would be considered a heretic for denying the teaching authority of the Church.

Consequently, your salvation not only rests upon belief in the atonement for your sins on the Cross, it must necessarily depend upon your faith in Mary's sinlessness. In fact, if must rest on her suffering and death, according to the Roman Catholic teachings cited above. This in itself should be enough to dissuade a person from holding any stock in the authority of men, who can so easily compromise the essential doctrine of redemption through Jesus Christ alone, to teach.

But for those who need proof, or at least a reasonable rebuttal to this idea of Mary's immaculate conception, let's examine it in light of the few Scriptures that I have cited as evidence to the contrary.

When it says, in Romans 3:23, that all men have sinned it doesn't just mean the male gender. In fact, the Roman Catholic New American Bible is the only edition that uses the word "men." All others simply state "all have sinned," or something similar. Nowhere, of course, does it say that Mary was any ex-

ception. If this were so important a doctrine, it would seem that the Lord would have made mention of it somewhere in His revealed Word.

In Luke 11:27-28 Jesus is definitely saying that everyone who hears the word of God and keeps it is blessed even above His own mother. Her blessing was in being chosen as a vessel to bear the human body of the Son of God. That, in itself, made her blessed above all other women. Yet, any person, man or woman, can be considered as blessed as Mary if they will recognize Jesus Christ as the means of their salvation and live accordingly.

Matthew 11:11 tells us that, in the opinion of Jesus (and who should know better?) John the Baptist was greater than any other born of woman. Here, again, only the New American Bible uses the word "man" where all others simply say "none other" or something similar. Nowhere in the original is there any implication that only males are being referred to. If this is the case, then Jesus was saying that no one who had been born up to that time was a greater human than John the Baptist. Naturally, the balance of Scripture allows for His own exception but it doesn't allow for Mary's.

In Luke 1:46,47 Mary, by her own words, acknowledges her need for salvation because she calls God her savior. Even God is not a savior to anyone who is without sin simply because they would already be enjoying His fellowship just as the angels. One does not need a savior unless he or she needs to be saved from something. The reason mankind needs a savior is to release us from the penalty of sin and its influence in our lives.

Jesus again placed all who do the will of the Father on an equal footing with His mother and his brothers when, in Matthew 12, He pointed to His disciples and said that they are His brothers, sisters and mother. That means that you can be accounted holy and pure if you will first of all accept the salvation that Jesus provided for you by His one-time sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary and allow the Holy Spirit to gain control of your will so that you may be found doing the will of the Father.

An important aspect of the doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception is that she was free of darkness of the intellect because of her sinlessness. If this is the case she most certainly would have been able to grasp what Jesus was telling her in Luke 2:49 about having to be in His Father's house. Yet Mary was just as puzzled as Joseph in not understanding the reasons for Jesus' behavior.

It must be borne in mind that all subsequent doctrines relating to the mother of Jesus are inexorably linked to this doctrine. Her perpetual virginity, her assumption into heaven, her position as Mother of God, cannot stand the test of logic or God's justice if this one doctrine of her immaculate conception is not true.

Whatever you choose to believe, you must understand that any doctrine that places a human being in a position of special favor with God, by its very nature, nullifies the professed belief in the atoning work of Jesus on the Cross. In order to have salvation, you must receive the gift by faith in Him only. To say that someone, as in this case, can be conceived without sin is to say that the cross is meaningless simply because God could have created each individual in the same manner, thereby avoiding the agony of Calvary. Yet this is contrary to His basic law of justice where He says that, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

MARY'S ASSUMPTION INTO HEAVEN

I DOGMA

I DECLARED BY POPE PIUS XII - AD 1950

I BASIS FOR BELIEF: TRADITION

I TIMES MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE:
NONE

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
TEACHES:

Definition:

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary - The doctrine of the taking up of the body and soul of the Mother of God into heaven after her death was an early teaching of the fathers and of special interest to all Christians. Tradition and theological reasoning show that the privilege of the Assumption was revealed implicitly. On Nov. 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII de-

clared the Assumption of the Blessed Mother of God a doctrine of faith. The solemnity is celebrated on Aug. 15 and is a holy day of obligation.

The feast was celebrated by the Christians of the seventh century, based on the Scriptures. In the OT the singularity of the Blessed Mother as the "woman" was declared (cf. Gn. 3:15) as being through whom the redemption would become fulfilled. The NT declares that redemption (Lk. 1; I Jn. 3:9) and the Blessed Virgin Mary was "full of grace" and could not be perfect as God foretold unless she remained incorruptible (cf. I Cor. 15:54-57). Pope Alexander III (1159 to 1181) wrote: "Mary conceived without detriment to her virginal modesty, brought forth her Son without pain, passed hence without decay, according to the word of the angel, or rather God speaking by the angel, that she might be shown to be full, not half-full of grace." (The Catholic Encyclopedia, Nelson-p. 56)

Teachings:

Almost as soon as Pius IX defined the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception, Rome was besieged with petitions for defining her bodily Assumption. It is calculated that from 1870 to 1940, over four hundred bishops, eighty thousand priests and religious, and more than eight million of the laity had formally signed requests asking for the definition.

As a consequence, on May 1, 1946, Pius XII sent the following questionnaire to all the bishops of the Catholic world: "Do you, Venerable Brethren, in view of the wisdom and prudence that is yours, judge that the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin can be proposed and defined as a dogma of faith; and do you, along with your clergy and faithful, desire it?"

Within a few months, the replies received in Rome were "almost unanimous" in favor of definition. The Pope drew the inevitable conclusion from the consent of those whom "the Holy Spirit has placed as bishops to rule the Church of God."

On November 1, 1950, Pius XII answered these requests of the Catholic Hierarchy with a solemn

definition that "by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by Our Own authority, We pronounce, declare, and define as divinely revealed dogma: The Immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, after her life on earth, was assumed, body and soul to the glory of heaven." (Encyclical *Munificentissimus Deus*)

The spontaneous reaction of the faithful was gratitude for the exalted honor paid to the Mother of God. The Pope's own sentiments were expressed to the bishops gathered in Rome for the occasion when he told them the joy he felt over the proclamation and the assurance it gave him that Mary would obtain the graces of which mankind stood in such dire need. On the level of piety and devotion, therefore, Mary's Assumption was only the climax in a series of definitions to honor the Blessed Virgin, beginning with the divine maternity at Ephesus and terminating in the past century with the doctrine of her Immaculate Conception. But dogmatically the Constitution of *Munificentissimus Deus* has a much deeper meaning.

Pope Pius defined Mary's Assumption as a truth divinely revealed. Of the two sources of revelation, theologians commonly say the Assumption was implicit in Tradition, in spite of the practical absence of documentary evidence before A.D. 300. Yet the Pope finally declared that the doctrine was in revelation. How do we know? On the answer to this question rests a new insight into Christian Tradition that had been gaining momentum since the eighteenth century. Briefly stated, Tradition is coming to be identified more with the Church's magisterium or teaching office and less exclusively as the source along with Scripture, of the truths of salvation. Behind this new emphasis is a development of dogma since the Council of Trent that reveals hidden depths in the Mystical Body of Christ. The Church is not only the guardian of a faith once and for all given to the apostles, but expositor of that faith in every age to the end of time.

In August of the same year that he defined the Assumption, the Pope laid down the principles that guided the marian definition. The Church's teaching authority, he said in *Humani Generis*, is not confined to reflecting or consolidating the past. It is also, and especially, the vital present-day function of an organism animated by the Spirit of God. "Together with the sources of revelation (Scripture and Tradition) God has given to his Church a living magisterium to elucidate and explain what is contained in the deposit of faith only obscurely and, as it were, by implication." The degree of obscurity, we may add, is unimportant. Given this faculty by her founder, whose Spirit of truth abides with her at all times, the Church can infallibly discern what belongs to revelation no matter how cryptic the contents may be.

Consequently, when Pius XII defined the Assumption, he did more than propose the doctrine for acceptance by the faithful or give them a new motive for devotion to the Blessed Mother. He indicated the Church's right to authorize a legitimate development in doctrine and piety that scandalizes Protestants and may even surprise believing Catholics. (The Catholic Catechism, Doubleday - pp. 160-161)

The Passion of our Lord found its echo in the compassion of his Holy Mother. In truth the sorrows of Mary, the sorrows of her trans-pierced heart, were necessary not only that many thoughts should be revealed of sorrowing men and women, but also for her own perfect sanctification. Her soul had to be made perfect in the furnace of trial and tribulation. As in all things else so pre-eminently in this must she resemble our Lord, that he was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Of all the redeemed his Mother must be nearest to his Cross, not only on Calvary, but also in every hour of her earthly pilgrimage.

But that pilgrimage, both for Jesus and for Mary, at length was over. And now that our Lord is glorified in his Kingdom, every tear that his Mother shed on earth shall be wiped away by his pierced hand, and changed into a jewel in the crown upon her peerless brow. Mary must die, for this

is the lot of mortals. "It is appointed unto man to die, and after death the judgement;" and as Jesus died, so will his Mother die, for in all things, so far as may be, shall her lot be like to his; moreover, since all her children must pass one day through the gate of death, so bitter to human nature, so their Mother will go before them, treading the same path. But in her passing hence there will be for her no bitterness, death will lead her straight to God. She had waited, obedient to the will of God who would have her remain a while on earth, the Apostles' Queen. But now the chains which held her captive at length were broken and her sinless soul winged its flight to be with her Son for ever. And Mary's judgement: "Well done, good and faithful servant." Were these words for which all Christ's servants wait expectant ever spoken as when they were addressed to her, who alone was crowned in heaven as the Mother of her Lord?

The bodies of the holy Apostles, of the Martyrs who shed their blood for Christ, of men and women famed for their sanctity, were to be carefully preserved and venerated in the Church from the first beginnings of Christianity. Of the Mother of God no relics should remain upon the earth. Mary was taken up, body and soul, to the unveiled presence of her Son. She was the mystic Ark of the Covenant which God had sanctified. The body of the Virgin Most Holy from which the Holy Spirit had formed the body of Christ should not be permitted to see corruption. Behold the Queen in her beauty by the side of her Son, as already the Psalmist saw her in prophetic vision, in a vesture of gold wrought about with divers colours. She is the eldest daughter of the Father, and the beloved Mother of the Son, and the chosen Spouse of the Everlasting Spirit.

We, too, have to die and to meet Christ in judgement. We trust to be greeted with forgiveness and love as we enter into his Kingdom. He will not reject us, whose arms were extended wide for us upon the Cross of pain. "Who is he that shall condemn?"

Christ Jesus who died for us?" (Rom. 8:34)

But if, notwithstanding all, our hearts fail within us at the thought of our sins and miseries, we will entreat our dear Mother who is also the Mother of our Judge, to be to us *Felix caeli porta*, the gate of a happy eternity, that when all is passing and death is near, she may turn her eyes of mercy towards us, and show unto us at length the ever-blessed Fruit of her womb, Jesus, teaching us to trust him absolutely and to the full. So may it be for us all we beseech thee, O loving, O kind, O sweet Virgin Mary. (The Teaching of the Catholic Church, Macmillan - pp. 547, 548)

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO REFUTE THE DOCTRINE OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY INTO HEAVEN:

II Kings 2:9-12

When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask for whatever I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha answered, "May I receive a double portion of your spirit." "You have asked something that is not easy," he replied. "Still, if you see me taken up from you, your wish will be granted; otherwise not." As they walked on conversing, a flaming chariot and flaming horses came between them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. When Elisha saw it happen he cried out, "My father! my father! Israel's chariots and drivers!" But when he could no longer see him, Elisha gripped his own garment and tore it in two.

Genesis 5:22-24:

Enoch lived three hundred years after the birth of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. The whole lifetime of Enoch was three hundred and sixty-five years. Then Enoch walked with God, and he was no longer here, for God took him.

I Corinthians 15:51-52:

Not all of us shall fall asleep, but all of us are to be changed—in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet. The trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

COMMENTS:

One might wonder what II Kings 2:9-11 and Genesis 5:22-24 have to

do with the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. Actually, they are an indication that the teachings around which this doctrine revolves are faulty. Notice that the Roman Catholic Church approves the teaching that Mary must die and, although she is far above every creature, even death cannot be spared her.

Yet, both Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven without seeing death. If God favored Mary above all others why would he not have spared her having to see death? But even more significant than this is the fact that death is the penalty for sin. Without sin there would be no death. The fact that Mary died at all, whether her body saw corruption or not, can only attest to the fact that she had to have been born in sin just as all humans are. Enoch and Elijah are proof that God can spare death to His children if He so sees fit, in spite of the fact that it is the consequence of sin. Elijah's and Enoch's lives were so exemplary that God saw fit to take them without their seeing death. If Mary's life was so much more exemplary than theirs, which the Roman Catholic Church teaches, then she would not have had to see death either.

Jesus was the exception on the other side. He was the only person who didn't deserve to die. Yet God made Him to be sin for our sins, and hung Him on a cross to pay the penalty for those sins. He could not die a natural death because His flesh was sinless. He had to be put to death in order to taste of it for our sakes. What a sacrifice! That God would become man for worms like us and allow Himself to suffer the humiliation and torture of death as a criminal. How can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation that He has provided for us?

We cannot forget I Corinthians 15:52. Here we are told that even all the members of Christ's Body who are alive on the day that He returns will be changed into their incorruptible bodies without seeing death. So again, God is indicating to us that the sting of death is still at His option for individuals, although there are only two recorded instances where He actually has, in the past, nullified the death penalty

for those He considered especially anointed.

This particular doctrine is also commemorated on a special, holy day of obligation. For those who don't know what a holy day of obligation is, it simply is a law that obliges all true believers to attend a Mass and observe that day in a special manner, in honor of the occasion for which it is named. In other words, not only are members obligated to acknowledge the proposed truth of the doctrine, but they are bound under the penalty of mortal sin to observe it in a special way. Should one not do so and die without confessing this sin he will be judged condemned to Hell for eternity regardless of the merits of Christ's death on the Cross for his sins.

INDULGENCES

Besides these six doctrines that nullify salvation by grace, there is the Roman Catholic practice of granting indulgences. For monetary payment, through doing penance, or by observing special rituals, the Catholic Church teaches that one may acquire credits toward purgatorial suffering for himself or for some loved one who has passed away.

While acknowledging that indulgences have been abused, the Roman Catholic Church ascribes that abuse to "the past." As if no such abuses occur today. But the very nature of indulgences is an abuse against the purity of the Faith. To make matters worse, the Roman Catholic Church condemns those who oppose the idea of indulgences:

[The Roman Catholic Church] teaches and commands that the usage of indulgences—a usage most beneficial to Christians and approved by the authority of the Sacred Councils—should be kept in the Church; and it condemns with anathema [cursing by ecclesiastical authority] those who say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them.

What could do more to denigrate the efficacious sacrifice of Jesus, our Savior? To say that men can earn credits toward their own salvation is to trample the blood of Christ under foot. It is to count that blood less than pure in its ability to pro-

vide complete and everlasting salvation for those who believe in Him.

CONCLUSION

As significant as these doctrines and practices are in nullifying salvation by grace, there is also to be considered the impact of the Roman Catholic Church's belief in its authority to teach from whatever motive it deems suitable. In its own words, "Tradition is coming to be identified more with the Church's magisterium or teaching office and less exclusively as the source along with Scripture, of the truths of salvation." This can only mean that the Roman Catholic Church regards its teaching office as more reliable than the Scriptures. The reason they can feel justified in this position is that they consider themselves the only true deposit of faith and, consequently, whatever they say has to be the truth. This is held to regardless of the obscurity of the tradition as their own words reveal.

In effect, then, this dogma, because of its threat of the penalty of mortal sin according to faith, nullifies the essential doctrine of faith in the atoning work of Christ on the Cross. It says that, in order to maintain fellowship with God, you must honor the mother of Jesus with special days of devotion. Should you not do so you can lose your salvation.

This fact cannot be denied. It is a condition which men have attached to the saving work of the Savior in dying for our sins.

Yet Paul tells us in Romans that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law. In this case, which takes precedent—the Word of God or the laws of men?

As in all other cases, you must be the final arbiter of that question for your own life. I would encourage you to take the Lord's words at their face value. "If the Son frees you, you will really be free" (John 8:36). v

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