

The UNION

Get Ready to Meet the King!

God Calls His Church to
Truth, Faith and Holiness

2019

Joan H. Richardson

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Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 9781612153698

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CHAPTER 6

Rites and Wrongs

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8 NASB)

Rite of Christening ¹⁸

Christening began as a rite in the church during the early second century. Its practice, sprinkling water on a baby, does not appear anywhere in the Scriptures. There is no mention whatsoever of infant christening.

Four obvious problems come to mind, which concern the rite of christening babies. First, babies cannot possibly recognize themselves as sinners and repent of their sins to receive the Lord for their salvation. Next, no one else can make that choice for them. Third, in churches where infants are christened, baptism by immersion is rarely available for the convert to Christ. Finally, it is a false notion that sprinkling water and speaking words over an infant cleanses him from sin and makes him a new creature; the Scriptures clearly bear witness against the doctrine.

The Greek word, *baptisma*, means to plunge underwater, to submerge, or to immerse. In the apostolic writings, baptism was first performed by the prophet in the desert. John was probably familiar with the Essenes, a sect of Jews who lived in the same wilderness of Judea and practiced baptism as a ceremonial rite for cleansing. But John called men to repent and be baptized as an act of faith to prepare them for the Messiah. When He also came to be baptized by John, Yeshua intensified its meaning; pointing to His death, burial, and resurrection, the Son of man would empathize with humanity; then the Spirit came upon Him.

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38)

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Baptism was given to us as the outward sign of a spiritual reality. Buried with Yeshua in His death by repentance, by faith in His forgiveness, we are raised with Him into new life. The spiritual experience of repentance and faith in the life of Jesus Christ ushers us into salvation, the gift of grace from God. Paul explained the spiritual significance of our redemption:

6 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ² God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? ³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:1-4)

Jesus never said, “Just sprinkle water on yourselves and your babies, and you will all be born again” or, “Be submerged into water and you will be born again.” That would be unspiritual. Neither sprinkling nor submerging causes a new birth, because it’s a supernatural experience given to the repentant sinner who receives Jesus into his heart by faith. Repentance and faith are mandatory for everyone who seeks the kingdom of God. If we believe anything else, we deny the words of God:

¹² But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: ¹³ which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

After believing the gospel, the biblical ordinance of baptism is the token of our spiritual experience. In the Spirit, we were vicariously immersed into His death and burial, and we were vicariously raised out of death with His resurrection. Because we were buried with Him in His death, we died to be raised in Him, born again by the Spirit of His life.

We live new lives because we have experienced a spiritual baptism that we publicly confessed by a physical baptism in water. The new birth is not by the will of man; it does not occur by ritual. The new birth is a miracle from the God of creation.

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Apart from ceremony, the Holy Spirit acts on the heart and nature of the contrite sinner who turns to the Savior by faith. The conversion from death to life occurs by an act of the Holy Spirit: He miraculously opens our spiritual eyes. Jesus described the process of the new birth to Nicodemus, a religious Jew:

⁵ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8 NIV)

As we vow our new lives to follow Jesus, we take the steps He took into the frigid waters of the Jordan; then the Spirit gently descended upon Him, just as He is given to each believer who obeys Him. By our obedience, the ordinance of baptism ushers us into discipleship. According to the Scriptures, as we repent, believe, and are baptized, we are granted the gift of the Holy Spirit, and those who don't argue the point are blessed:

³¹ God exalted this man to His right hand as ruler and Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." (Acts 5:31-32 HCSB) – Peter and the apostles

Would Naaman have been cleansed of leprosy, had he not obeyed the prophet Elisha when he commanded him to wash seven times in the Jordan? Likewise, immersion is an act of obedience, showing men and angels we believe in the death and resurrection of the Lord. But baptism does not save us any more than circumcision saved the Jews. Nevertheless those who argue against baptism are self-willed, opposed to the commitment true repentance brings, or they are believing men, not God.

Believers must be baptized to receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit because we have been commanded to do so, and our faith is only alive by obedience; we yield to His command, and He blesses us. Is that difficult to understand? Is our salvation

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not a cooperative effort? Do we work out our salvation with fear and trembling as the thief on the cross did? This is not burdensome—it was our hearts' desire when we turned from sin to Christ. Are His words now problematic since our teachers insist we don't need any more? If we need no more, why was the Book written? But someone may question the sincerity of our faith.

Baptism is an object-lesson for those who lack understanding and a statement to those who realize its significance. It is the confession of faith and a good conscience by obedience to the Word. More than that, baptism is mentioned several times in the apostolic writings as the step of faith that follows repentance; it's the new covenant token of our spiritual vow.

In opposition to the Scriptures, Roman Catholic doctrine declares that infant christening¹⁹ remits all sins, whether original or personal; that christening marks the soul as belonging to God; that by the ceremony, the infant is born again and receives new life; that the rite of christening infuses grace, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit, making the baby truly a child of God. These are all presumptuous and false teachings.

Most denominations follow these erroneous doctrines that please their ears but make the cross ineffective. Martin Luther, "father of the Reformation," also taught that infant christening results in the forgiveness of sins. Furthermore he taught that the ceremony delivers its participants from death and the devil; that it sanctifies them for holiness and eternal life and saves them through a new birth—all this, by a ritual! These were taught to Martin by men from whom he received his formal education; the errors of Martin Luther's training weren't from the Spirit of God.

Though there is no Scriptural precedent for infant sprinkling, Presbyterians and some Reformed churches purport that infant christening is like infant circumcision in Abraham's covenant. However nowhere in the apostolic texts is such an analogy drawn; nor is the rite of infant or adult christening mentioned anywhere in the New Testament; even so, their insistence is an example of the intellectual dishonesty and arrogance of the institutional churches that deny the truth. Some point to first or second century practices, but they only confirm that deceptions began spreading in the early years; apostles warned us of them and wept. Roman Catholic traditions perpetuated the teachings.

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²⁸ A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹ No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God. (Romans 2:28-29 NIV)

Moses, by whom God gave the Law, discerned the difference between ceremony and relationship with God. He understood the weaknesses of his own nature and realized only a merciful God could pardon his past transgressions and provide his future hope. He trusted in the grace of God, but tens of thousands of circumcised Hebrews lost their lives in the wilderness because God destroyed them in His wrath for their unbelief. They were made an example for us all.

Papal Infallibility

Our Savior upbraided religious leaders for substituting the words of God with theirs. By falsifying the unchangeable Word, they slander the virtue of the One who holds the keys of hell and death. When a leader teaches the church to believe that his words may supersede, substitute, subtract from, or add to the words of God, that leader and his faith blasphemes the Holy Name.

And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.
(Deuteronomy 30:6)

Neither rituals, ceremonies, nor celebrations of feasts can accomplish the work of our faith in His death and resurrection. But the Lord has required us to repent of stubborn rebellion and be baptized; immersion is the test: will we obey or argue against the Word of God? Do we believe Him or another?

⁵ Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. ⁶ Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. (Proverbs 30:5-6)

In 1075, Pope Gregory VII ("the Great") declared that all popes are inerrant and are saints. He then ordered statues, which

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were sculpted in his likeness and placed in churches throughout Europe. Pope Gregory VII, who is revered as one of the greatest popes, was responsible for the Gregorian Reforms, mostly based on the *Dictatus Papae*,²⁰ or Dictates of the Pope. The following are among the list of dictates, ordered by number: 2. That the Roman pontiff alone can with right be called universal. 8. That of the pope alone all princes shall kiss the feet. 10. That his name alone shall be spoken in the churches. 12. That the pope may depose emperors. 19. That he himself may be judged by no one. 22. That the Roman church has never erred; nor will it err to all eternity, the Scriptures bearing this witness. 26. Anyone not at peace with the Roman church shall not be considered Catholic.

These preposterous ideas have gained a great following, but whoever desires to be like Jesus must humble himself, not presuming a high place—Christ called us to serve others in love. He who created the universe sent His Word to live with us: did He command the disciples to kiss His feet, or did Jesus wash theirs? He told them to do the same. Should the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be spoken in churches, or is the position of the pope as important as the sovereignty of God?

All government is from God; He alone seats rulers to bless, judge, or test the deeds of men. There are no good men, but God alone reserves the right to seat or depose them, and no mortal equals Him. Only the laws of God are higher than the laws of nations, yet popes have imagined their position permits them to alter the Ten Commandments!

¹³ Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,¹⁴ or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—¹⁶ as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

(1 Peter 2:13-16 NKJV)

The Scriptures declare each of us will be judged for what is done in the body, whether good or bad. No man is exempt from the Judgment: every *idle word* will be judged, but our hope is in Christ who changes our hearts and our words. (See Mat. 12:36.)

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According to the Roman Church, the Roman Church has never erred. But what's the truth? The only true universal and apostolic church consists of everyone who trusts in the Savior, yields to His Spirit, and obeys His words by the strength He provides; we are universally one who believe the Holy Bible. ["Catholic" means *universal*, and apostolic refers to the first apostles.] Those who deny or distort its words will be judged by the Creator, the Father to all who find refuge in His Son.

In 1870, the First Vatican Council of Pope Pius IX wrote the *Declaration of Papal Infallibility*.²¹ The official church dogma declared that when the pope sits on the "chair of Peter," he speaks as the supreme apostolic authority, his words being *equivalent* to those of God! Popes had used this "right" several times prior to the year of its declaration, having been oblivious to the fact that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. Only God is holy, and His Word stands true forever:

"You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command YOU. (Deuteronomy 4:2 NASB)

¹⁸ For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:¹⁹ And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18-19)

The Second Commandment

⁸ Thou shalt not make thee *any* graven image, *or* any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the waters beneath the earth:⁹ Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and the fourth *generation* of them that hate me,¹⁰ and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep My commandments. (Deuteronomy 5:8-10) [Mercy for the obedient]

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God commands that we not use carved images in worship, whether things in heaven, on earth, or in the waters beneath. The Vatican denies the use of its idols for worship but insists carved idols are used to inspire hearts. The living Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ resides in the hearts of us who believe in Him. Do we need idols for inspiration? Isn't the Spirit of Christ enough to inspire us? But Rome tests God, rejecting His commandments!

⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NKJV)

² Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* now their God? ³ But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. ⁴ Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands. ⁵ They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: ⁶ they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: ⁷ they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. ⁸ They that make them are like unto them; so *is* every one that trusteth in them. (Psalm 115:2-8)

Exposing the truth rather than denying it is imperative if we are to stand before God. In everything, darkened hearts oppose the light of God in Jesus. We have no light in ourselves unless we believe and walk in His Spirit. By the fear of God, we resist evil, but He stores up wrath against men who make a pompous display of self-righteousness to conceal centuries of darkness and sin. Here is hypocrisy: men have an outward appearance of holiness but are inwardly evil; all their righteousness is rags:

²¹ He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. ²² Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord,

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how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? ²³ Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. ²⁴ He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. (John 14:21-24)

See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it. (Deuteronomy 12:32 NIV)

The early bishops compromised the faith of the apostles. The evidence is in their writings and decisions that differed from the Scriptures. Their lukewarm affection for Christ swayed the leaders to find safety in the courts of the emperor. The few who remained faithful became objects of ridicule and hatred by the unfaithful. Ultimately, the institutional church killed them.

The Ten Commandments of Catechism ²²

Insolence blinded the leaders; considering themselves wise, they became fools by deleting, making additions, and distorting the inspired Word. In 787, the 2nd Nicaean Council ²³ ignored the second of the Ten Commandments, which prohibited carved images for worship. By deleting it, the Roman church dared to change the commands that Christ said will never alter.

⁸ The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, ⁹ for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. (1Thessalonians 1:8-10 NIV)

By the decision of the church council, idol worship has remained the standard of that church. With the addition of idols in places of worship, the bishops protected the pagan idolatries throughout the empire. In the doctrinal statement of the Roman Church, statues are permissible since they are religious in nature; but their religious nature is exactly the reason God prohibits them in the second of the Ten Commandments.

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⁴²Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, because I came from God and I am here. For I didn’t come on My own, but He sent Me. ⁴³ Why don’t you understand what I say? Because you cannot listen to My word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the Devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of liars. ⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. ⁴⁶ Who among you can convict Me of sin? If I tell the truth, why don’t you believe Me? ⁴⁷ The one who is from God listens to God’s words. This is why you don’t listen, because you are not from God.”
(John 8:42-47 HCSB)

The history of Roman Catholicism reveals fourth century churches morphing into a pagan religion, only a nominal church that demonized those who refused to comply, persecuting them as “heretics,” which often meant torture and death for the impenitent.²⁴ Nevertheless those who believe the Word and who possess the Holy Spirit belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and love Him by faith in the original directives of the apostles. The church intended to condemn them as “infidels” by excommunications; yet the real heretics were the manslayers, the hypocrites! God doesn’t demand that we believe a religion made up by men. As the Jewish prophets foretold, He sent His Son and raised Him from the dead to rescue us from the everlasting wrath of God.

Have a Happy Ishtar?

At the first Council of Nicaea, bishops and other church leaders agreed to celebrate the festival called *Easter* as the day of the resurrection of Christ. Though that might seem innocent, it was not. By defaming the Jewish Feast of First Fruits, the actual day the Lord was raised, they defamed its holy prophecy. To this day, they have not rescinded the antichrist decisions. Had they been ignorant of the Scriptures, perhaps unaware of their sins? Didn’t they know better than to create another religion, one more familiar to pagans? Reverting to their previous roots, the gentiles changed the significance of our Jewish faith: Yeshua

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had fulfilled the prophetic purpose of the celebration when He became *the firstfruits of them that sleep*. (See 1 Cor. 15:20)

The bishops omitted the Jewish festival that prophesied the resurrection of the Savior. Though the festivals aren't required in the new covenant, God had honored the Jewish feasts in the life of Yeshua. He who created them does not disdain them; rather, He fulfilled them. And the feasts are witnesses to the Word.

The bishops removed the feasts that witness of His death, burial, and resurrection and agreed to adopt an ancient Roman festival to a fertility goddess in preference to the Hebrew Day of First Fruits: “We further proclaim to you the good news of the agreement concerning the holy Easter, that this particular also has through your prayers been rightly settled; so that all our brethren in the East who formerly followed the custom of the Jews are henceforth to celebrate the said most sacred feast of Easter at the same time with the Romans and yourselves and all those who have observed Easter from the beginning.” [from the Synodical Letter of the Council of Nicaea,²⁵ AD 325.]

“The custom of the Jews”? The festivals were not customs—God had commanded His people to observe them, commemorating their history, putting Israel on display, and revealing His inspired prophecies, which He had integrated with the festivals. The Jewish feasts pinpoint the times for the arrival of the Savior and His redemptive acts with astonishing accuracy.

Unlike the Word of God, the goddess of fertility and war, Eostre or Ishtar of Babylon, (*Ee-ster*) is found in the ancient epic tale *Gilgamesh*,²⁶ which took place in Uruk (Ur?) of Mesopotamia, or Babylonia. It's Ashtoreth of the Philistines, counterpart of Baal, called Gilgamesh or Nimrod. Its name is linked to “aster,” or star. Since Babel, it was worshiped as a goddess of harvest and fertility—Babylon invaded the church.

Israel had often fallen into spiritual adultery by joining the gentiles, prostituting themselves to the gods they'd created. The LORD judged His chosen people, yet they repeatedly engaged in pagan worship, spurring more wrath.

Today we worship on Easter Sunday, then take the children home to their rabbits, eggs, and chicks—all fertility symbols—incongruous with the risen Savior who once said, *Let the little children come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven*. (See

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Mat. 19:14; Mk. 10:14; Lk. 18:16) What are we teaching the children?

In time, churches throughout the empire followed suit, celebrating Easter with Roman pagans rather than the proper Day of First Fruits with Messianic believers. Our faithful God has not yet poured out wrath against the hypocrisies of a false church, but His chosen Israel will be received again. He didn't rescue us from sin to compromise with idolaters—we need to be saved! We need sanctification and holiness by the Holy Spirit, not by the works of the flesh but by the power of His Spirit.

When we walk in the Spirit, we obey the Lord, but His laws judge the works of the flesh, condemning men who change His words with leaven, adding traditions to hypocrisies; as well as men who treat the Holy Spirit with contempt by returning to the works of self-righteousness. The councils misled us, but God gave us His Word and His Holy Spirit to sanctify believers.

³ He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ... ⁷ Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

⁸ *“These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me,
⁹ And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”*
(Matthew 15:3, 7-9 NKJV)

⁵ Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.” ⁷ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have taken no bread.” ... ¹¹ “How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—*but* to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ¹² Then they understood that He did not tell *them* to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16:5-7, 11-12 NKJV)

Leaven is the metaphor used for false teachings, traditions, and opinions. Jesus saw it in rabbis who could not understand

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His statements because they'd embraced fallacies. Have we done the same? With their opinions as points of reference, they couldn't reorient their hearts to the truth. This made them the sons of their father the devil: they had received his lies.

When we receive lies, we follow the enemies of God who oppose His words. Religious institutions teach vanities as facts. If we receive their hypocrisy by believing other men, we will also approach the Scriptures with preconceived ideas in leavened minds, and we too will be puffed up—proud, even arrogant. Can men change the Word of God? No, His Word stands forever, but when we believe men, we trust their perspectives as well.

Rather than drawing close to God, we remove the effect of His Word with various opinions that muddle our ability to know the truth. By misinformation, renewed hearts and minds can become proud and unbelieving, lukewarm and compromised.

In the earliest congregations, Jewish and gentile believers worshiped, agreeing as one. Then in AD 321, the Edict of Constantine²⁷ substituted the seventh day Sabbath of the fourth commandment with the *Venerable Day of the Sun* as the “day of rest.” In 364 the Council of Laodicea²⁸ confirmed Sunday as the sanctified day of rest for Christians worldwide.

While now the churches called the seventh day of the week *the Sabbath*, only their priests were permitted to observe it. They reasoned since Christ rose on the first day of the week, they'd change a commandment. Lightly esteeming them, they thought it unnecessary to keep the laws of God. Their changes pleased pagans but not Jewish believers who refused to defile the Scriptures.

As the years passed, the church compromised the Sabbath altogether, calling their new day of rest “the Lord's Day” and eventually rewording the commandments to fit their alteration. The first apostles never dreamed of altering the day God had made holy, the Sabbath of the Ten Commandments! As with all moral laws, it had existed before Eden. God had sanctified and called His Sabbath holy because He had rested from His work of creation on the seventh day. [*Sabbath / Shabbat* means “rest.”] As its Lord, Christ kept the Sabbath holy. (See Mk. 2:28; Lu 6:5)

The hypocrisy is obvious: imagining believers don't need to obey the commandments of God, bishops changed the Scriptures

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by creating their own laws, which they then insisted believers must obey! Despite the truth, the changes remain in what the RCC now calls the “Ten Commandments of Catechism.”²⁹

Concerning the Sabbath, the Protestant churches followed what they had always regarded as the Lord’s day, not stopping to think that God grafted us into an olive tree, Israel. Its root should bear us, not the other way around; however, most of the bishops turned the churches from our Jewish roots to pagan customs.

They refused to preserve the Ten Commandments, which Jesus said would not pass away till everything is fulfilled. The RCC later taught that missing Sunday Mass was a *mortal sin*.³⁰ If it were a mortal sin, who committed the sin but the ones who changed the laws of God for a pagan culture? who perpetuated this? At that time, the churches did!

¹⁹ For though I be free from all *men*, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. ²⁰ And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; ²¹ to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. ²² To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some.

(1 Corinthians 9:19-22)

Bishops ordered Christians to desist from their practice of keeping the Sabbath as their day of rest, denouncing them as cursed heretics for observing the Jews’ seventh day while calling their God our own! If not for the Hebrew Scriptures, how would they have known about the Sabbath at all? After the Edict of Constantine,³¹ businesses closed on Sundays as the pagans had throughout Rome’s empire. By ratifying the decision forty-three years later, the council in Laodicea sanctioned the earlier edict.

² That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. ³ For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: ⁴ who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of

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the law, and the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. (Romans 9:2-5)

⁷ Therefore accept one another, just as the Messiah also accepted you, to the glory of God. ⁸ For I say that the Messiah became a servant of the circumcised on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises to the fathers, ⁹ and so that Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy.

**Therefore I will praise
You among the Gentiles,
and I will sing psalms
to Your name.**

¹⁰ Again it says: **Rejoice, you Gentiles, with His people!**

¹¹ And again:

**Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;
all the peoples should praise Him.**

¹² And again, Isaiah says:

**The root of Jesse will appear,
the One who rises to rule the Gentiles;
the Gentiles will hope in Him.** (Romans 15:7-12 HCSB)

The Lord said, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Since He is the Lord of the Sabbath, we believe His words. (See Mk. 2:27-28) The Sabbath is a day for us to rest. The question is, "Do we rest in Him?" But another thought comes to mind: willing to accommodate pagans, the bishops strengthened Rome's Empire, Constantine's preeminent desire.³² By altering the laws of God and ordering their transgression, they separated the gentile and Jewish assemblies, which disintegrated as the institutional church became pagan. Is that morally acceptable?

During the six centuries of papal Inquisitions that began in the thirteenth century, up to fifty million people were killed. Is this Christianity? Does the Lord Jesus appear in any of this violence and murder? He does not! The bloodshed of the Roman church is led by one man, its pope. By the murder of Christians and Jews, the Roman Catholic Church has slain Christ and his

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brethren while using the holy name of Jesus to mask their evil practices. This is the anti-Christ spirit that entered the church..

In 1096: Roman Catholic crusaders slaughter half the Jews in Worms, Germany. 1098: RC crusaders slaughter the entire city of Antioch. 1099: RC crusaders massacre 70,000 Muslims and Jews when they capture Jerusalem. 1208-1226: RC crusaders murder almost the entire population of southern France, Albigensian Christians. 1236: Roman Catholic crusaders destroy Jews in the Anjou and Poitou regions of western France, trampling 3000 to death under their horses for their refusal of baptism. 1243: Roman Catholic mobs burn alive all the Jews in Berlitz, Germany. 1298: RC mobs burn alive all the Jews in Rottingen, Germany. April 26, 1349: RC mobs burn to death all the Jews in Germersheim, Germany. 1348-49: RC mobs blame the Jews for the bubonic plague and hang, burn, and drown them by the thousands. 1389: RC mobs murder 3000 Jews in Prague when they refuse baptism. 1481-83: Under the direction of RC Spanish Inquisitors, authorities burn 2000 people at the stake. 1540-70: RC armies slew 900,000 Waldensian Christians. 1550-60: RC soldiers tortured, hung, and burned 250,000 Dutch Protestants. 1553-58: The RC Queen Mary I (“Bloody Mary”) ruled England, burning hundreds of Protestants at the stake. During the 15th and 16th centuries, translations of the Bible were burned with the martyrs. 1572: St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. French RC troops murdered 10,000 Protestants in the first three days and another 8000 as the slaughter spread to the countryside. 1618-48: The Thirty Years’ War was a religious war, instigated by the Roman Catholic Jesuit order of priests in an attempt to kill all the Protestants in Europe. 1641-49: 100,000 Protestants were slain in Ireland by the RC Jesuit order and its agents. 1685: 500,000 French Protestant Huguenots were slain by order of the RC king, Louis XIV. 1938-45: RC Fuhrer Adolf Hitler and Monsignor Tiso slaughter six million Jews in Europe. 1941-45: RC Ustashi of the fascist state of Croatia kill one million Serbian Orthodox Christians with killer squads often led by Franciscan priests, monks, and friars, according to the plans of Jesuit prelates, Aloysius Stepinac and Ivan Saric.⁵⁴