

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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CHAPTER 7

The Apostasy

Peter, the Lord's half-brothers, and the other apostles were married, and while they evangelized, they often traveled with their wives. *Cephas* [or *Petrus*, i.e., Peter (*Simon*)] was married:

⁵ Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? ⁶ Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living? (1 Corinthians 9:5-6 NIV) [Notice the apostles' wives worked to help support their husbands' ministries.]

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew.

³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. (Mark 1:29-30 NIV)

About Celibacy

Marriage is a sacred institution. God gave us the blessings of marriage and procreation before the fall of Adam. Godly saints have married over the ages, finding their blessing in the nuptial covenant, but doctrines of demons command men to abstain from natural sexual desire in its appropriate place, marriage. The Roman priesthood is under a vow of celibacy. With priests as sex offenders, why does the church insist on such a vow?

4 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. ² Such teachings come through hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared with a hot iron. ³ They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:1-3 NIV)

In 1123, the First Lateran Council³³ forbade marriage within the priesthood. The Second Lateran Council,³⁴ which convened in 1139, called the marriage bed "impure" in canons six and

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seven. This was the first general law of celibacy in the church. Has the church changed her attitude? The Roman church altered its philosophy about marriage. Today's church honors marriage and the family with a strong stand for the life of the child; some priests have married, but with limitations on their ministries. However, history shows a number of *popes* were married.³⁵

Marriage must be respected by all, and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge immoral people and adulterers. (Hebrews 13:4 HCSB) [Keep marriage moral]

³ Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*. ⁵ Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

(1 Corinthians 7:3-5 NKJV)

²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. ³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* ³²This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:28-32 NKJV)

Pope Urban II³⁶ imprisoned married priests and sold their wives and children into slavery, adding the money from the sale into the church coffers. At the Fourth Lateran Council of 1213,³⁷ under Pope Innocent II, celibacy became mandatory for clerics, sanctioning a declaration made at the First Nicaean Council.

While victims of sexual abuse³⁸ by priests cry out for justice, the Vatican does not protect children from a celibate priesthood; popes could prevent the ruination of lives, but embrace doctrines of demons instead. Nothing can make an anti-Christ church holy, having taken its stance against the Word of God for centuries.

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¹⁸ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:18-20 NIV)

Wake Up and Watch!

Deliberately breaking a commandment is a “grave mortal sin,”³⁹ in Roman Catechism. However, the councils that became the Roman Catholic Church broke the fourth commandment by changing the Sabbath to the first day of the week, disregarding the Word of God on His sanctified day of rest, which He made holy on the seventh day of creation. It is the longest of all ten commandments, giving rest to handmaids and servants, and even to their beasts on the seventh day. Find your rest in the Lord and walk in the Spirit, not the flesh. There remains a sabbath for us.

⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: Has not God chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

⁸ If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself,*” you do well; ⁹ but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, “*Do not commit adultery,*” also said, “*Do not murder.*” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

(James 2::5-13 NKJV; ref. Ex. 20:13, 14) [The royal law of love is from the Ten.]

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Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made. (Genesis 2:3)

The Roman church omitted the second commandment and divided the tenth into two to make up for the loss of the second. In this way, their version appears as The Ten, but with obvious duplicity, permitting idols in the church. The RCC is a religion of works, replacing the laws of God with its own. Unlike their leaders, Jesus esteemed all Ten while He Himself rested in the Father. His Sermon on the Mount revealed their authority:

¹⁷ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-20)

As the Lord of the Sabbath, Messiah continued the sermon, naming requirements far greater than the Ten. We who receive Him are a dwelling place, His holy temple. As it is written: *Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.* (Lev. 23:3) It isn't as though we are under the heavy yoke of the Law; we walk in His Spirit, and His commands are our pleasure.

While we rationalize to discount the Word, we are short-sighted, ignorant of the wisdom of God. Once we discover the truth, we must believe it; then it changes us forever. At rest in Him, we abide in Him, and He lives through us. The Sabbath of the Lord is truly in our dwellings. His mark is not a low calling or a shoo-in. It's a race, a purposeful *pressing on to the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, (See Php. 3:12)—a crucified life that bears its cross daily.

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Our goal is perfect holiness, or we have no goal at all. We can't become accustomed to change unless we expect Him to conform us to His likeness. The object of our faith never declines but begins and ends with spiritual renewal. Apart from revelation by the Holy Spirit, we can't understand the words of God.

The renewal of our minds and hearts requires that we do just three things: believe the Scriptures, take in their words, and rely on Jesus' Spirit to open our understanding. If we have questions, we ask Him, *pressing* Him for answers till we understand. Only He can do the work, and He will do if we are willing. If we fall, we confess our sin, and He forgives and picks us up. If we suffer discipline, His steadfast love keeps and comforts us.

Pagan Rome

For centuries, the church in Rome slaughtered our brothers and sisters wherever dissenters opposed her. Untold numbers of godly Christians suffered martyrs' deaths for disagreeing with the Roman Catholic Church. Popes manipulated emperors and kings to execute their opponents, behaving as adherents of false Christianity mixed with brutal, bloodthirsty Rome.

Unlike this world, Jesus never commanded us to love, not slay our opponents, and He lived that way. He said that hatred is murder in our hearts—it condemns us. The Lord commanded us to follow Him in humility and gentleness with meekness toward God—considering our own weaknesses.

Though we must contend for the faith, opposing false teachings by Scriptural truth, tearing down strongholds by believing God, and exposing deceptions by speaking the truth; our intentions must always be to free those in bondage to sin.

Where was the heart of Jesus in Crusades and Inquisitions? When saints, Jews, and dissenters were tortured on the rack, the pyramid, and the skull crusher, where was the gentle, humble follower of Christ then? He was replaced by devils—wolves in the fold—torturing and killing men, women, and children who had done no harm but had faith in the love of Christ—all in the holy name of the Lord! Even today the god of all false religions hides behind many names that don't truthfully identify him.

The dogma that the Vatican "has never erred, nor will it ever err" has continued to deceive multitudes, even after the 1960's

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when Pope John XXIII⁴⁰ refuted the long-held declaration that the marriage bed was impure. The truth is, the system changes with new additions from every pope, shifting on a sandy foundation.

Knowing how dismally the church of Rome has erred, all who believe in Jesus Christ must come out of her. We must all depart from lying spirits to seek the truth. Whoever rejects the truth will fall for a great delusion because all who deny the light love darkness, the reason for the condemnation! (See Jn 3:19-21) If we love Christ, we live in the light as His Spirit changes us.

Unlike the Vatican's dictates, both the Tenakh [OT] and the apostolic writings, which were largely drawn from the Tenakh, are true. After His resurrection, Messiah opened the words of the Law and the Prophets to His disciples' understanding. Popes have never represented the Lord; they are mere men, presuming a place Christ granted no man.

The blood of martyred saints is on the hands of the papacy, while the world blindly overlooks its many offenses. Although popes profess to follow the Bible, their teachings consistently circumvent its words by mixing truth with falsehood. Their lies have enriched the church purse for over fifteen hundred years!

The apparent unity of Roman Catholic churches is not the answer to our schisms. What good is a union of churches that all believe the same lies? The truth is never seen in the strength of multitudes on earth; there is never safety in numbers. Truth is the strength of all who believe the words of God, and though only few remain, we will overcome the world. We will not find the truth in institutions, scholarly opinions, or big congregations. Yeshua declared it at the place where He met Martha; He was on His way to raise Lazarus from the dead:

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26 NIV)

A man might look righteous, even loving, but his thoughts belie his outer man, and God knows his thoughts. Even the devil can appear as an angel of light, but that doesn't change who he really is. Jesus said to Pilate, *My kingdom is not of this world*, (See Jn. 18:36a) and He said, *The kingdom of God cometh*

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not with observation. (Lk. 17:20b) Of men who lust for power, Paul wrote:

¹³ For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NKJV)

The Mother of Institutions

As centuries passed, the errors increased until the Roman church became like the world: violent, hateful, and prone to deception. Citing Scriptures without knowledge, bishops were soon chained to just one religious authority: the papacy whose church emerged from the Roman Empire.

¹¹ For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹² Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. ¹³ Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. ¹⁵ Whosoever hateth *his* brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. (1 John 3:11-15)

¹⁴ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

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In the following passage, the word *you* is addressed to the believers who have overcome the false prophets and the spirit of anti-Christ; *them* and *they* describe false prophets and teachers; the words *we* and *us* identify the apostles and all who receive their words by the Holy Spirit:

⁴ You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

(1 John 4:4-6 NIV)

A Great Deception

In the late 1500's, Protestants began their departure from Catholicism, resulting in denominations that multiplied over the centuries. Sometimes by revelations and often by traditions, new leaders rose to draw like-minded believers into their folds. Still under the influence of Catholicism, most retain roots from Rome with teachings that represent a religion unlike the apostles' faith.

There is a way *that seems* right to a man,
But its end *is* the way of death.

(Proverbs 14:12 NKJV; also 16:25)

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

Each has an innate sense of righteousness and justice, but as years pass, some change their requirements, relaxing their own standards because they are unwilling to accept responsibility for their actions. But not even time can tarnish His standards. The way we walk in His shoes is to let Him walk in ours.

For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. (Rom. 10:3 NKJV)

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The deception of self-righteousness is rampant in the world. Its greatest camouflage is its use of the Christian vernacular apart from a spiritually transformed life, but a man can become proud if he has forgotten that he was cleansed from his past sins.

Paul said, *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* (Gal. 2:20) Nothing less will do.

The self-righteous man relies on sheer willpower for favor with a god he imagines; however he has neglected the true God of the entire Jewish biblical account. He adds and deletes its words to accommodate the nature of a god he prefers. Haven't many churches done this? Having practiced sin for so long, is only a veneer of righteousness left? Continuing in sin apart from repentance, many insult and spurn the Spirit of grace.

The Holy Spirit fulfills the righteous requirements of the moral law, manifesting His spiritual attributes in us. As we yield to the Lord, He instructs our hearts and minds to form us as His masterpiece. His way is narrow, but He bears our burdens, and we find rest in His arms.

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate, for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14 NKJV) – Jesus

"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48 NASB) – Jesus

³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

(2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 NASB) [Re: the coming Day of the Lord.]

How might history see today's American church? Merciful historians might tell of those who resisted the injustices and unrighteousness of a pagan culture but were overpowered by the majority who compromised the truth of God to be at peace with

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the world. Left to ourselves alone, we are imperfect; nevertheless, by faith in His atonement, we grow into His righteousness, and God perfects us—He makes us holy as He is holy.

In Conclusion

A great apostasy began in the early years of the fourth century—an organized apostasy that transformed the nature of the church by an entirely new perspective. The leaders now perceived the church as an institution, operated by Rome, in which bishops in long robes had an outward appearance of righteousness that often did not reflect the inward man of the heart.

The Roman Catholic Church has been ruled, not by the Bible, but by men, climbing a ladder of hierarchy for political favors and personal advantage. Thus, Roman Catholicism is a political institution that has sought power over the whole earth, and it has sought out and murdered those who refuse its dictates.

Roman Catholics are not terrible people. Nevertheless, the institution was taken over by men of the anti-Christ spirit since the time of Pope Siricius and Leo I, who claimed authority over all churches. Even so, some gentle and loving people have stayed who should have left; they might have kept the law of love, but its corrupt leadership has its own set of unrighteous dictates. As the wheat grows among the tares, they are not uprooted until the day of judgment when the secrets of men's hearts are revealed.

The true Christian church is not an institution or an organization. Yeshua said it is not observable because true Christianity, the kingdom of God, is within us—it's a matter of the heart. The true faith is based on the gospel of Jesus Christ, which He announced by calling all men to repentance, to faith in His death and resurrection, and to a new life by relationship with our heavenly Father, our Abba, through His Holy Spirit, sealing us as His own. Jesus said those who obey Him are those who love Him, and we are loved by His Father. We follow Him by the Word, the knowledge of the truth, and the Holy Spirit of God.