

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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PART II

ROMAN CATHOLIC DOGMA

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. (Acts 17:24 NIV) – Paul in Athens

¹⁶ Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17 NIV)

¹⁶ What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said, “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

¹⁷ “Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

¹⁸ “I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

(2 Corinthians 6:16-18 NIV)

⁵ And on her forehead a name was written:

MYSTERY,
BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS
OF THE EARTH.

⁶ I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

(Revelation 17:5-6 NKJV) [Spiritual Babylon has pursued every empire. Rising out of Babel, she seduced the nations with her adulteries; then Israel and Judah, and later, the church. We've seen her in Rome, but in the end of days, she is a mysterious trading city that rules over the kings of the earth.]

CHAPTER 4

The State Church

Having established the biblical view of heresy, we know heresies are doctrines or teachings that neither conform to His Word nor agree with His Holy Spirit, and these two are One. Whether a teaching is heretical isn't dependent on its comparison with traditional orthodoxy or doctrines men have parroted for centuries. The dogma of the Roman church, forced upon the conscience of the people, should be carefully studied, comparing it exclusively with the Word of God. Does it stand the test, or will the Light of Truth expose its deadly errors?

³⁶ Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. ³⁷ Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice. (John 18:36-37)

A Nominal Church

In the fourth century, a post-apostolic gathering of bishops established its church doctrines under the auspices of the Roman emperor in Nicaea, a city in present-day Turkey. Historians have written and taught about the controversial figure and emperor, Constantine, who called for the creation of an organized church when, in AD 324, he planned the first Council of Nicaea.⁶ Was that a good thing, or had the wolf slipped into the fold?

“With emphasis on doctrines which left unaffected our way of life, the Christian Church could accept Constantine as its prize convert. And yet Constantine, after his alleged conversion, murdered his conquered brother-in-law Licinius; sentenced to death his eleven-year-old nephew, killed his eldest son, Crispus; brought about the death of his second wife; took the nails that were supposed to come from the cross of Christ and used one in his war helmet and another on the bridle of his war horse. Yet

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he was canonized by the Greek Church and his memory celebrated as ‘equal to the apostles.’ He talked and presided at the opening of the Council of Nicaea, which was called to frame a creed, and he was hailed as ‘a bishop of bishops.’ Could this have happened if the men who had gathered there had made the Sermon on the Mount an essential part of the Creed? It had no place in it, so Constantine could be at home.”⁷ – E. Stanley Jones

³ Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. ⁵ Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. ⁷ Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. ⁸ Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God. ⁹ Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. ¹⁰ Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed *are* ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Matthew 5:3-12; cf. Prov. 11:17; Ps 24:4; 2 Chr. 36:16)

Those who cling to their pagan roots cannot be one with Jesus Christ. Constantine’s profession of faith was based on a vision of the cross, appearing to him and promising him victory in battle, which indeed he gained. But a vision doesn’t constitute a man’s salvation. Faith in Christ, repentance, and a transformed life that continues to grow, living by faith: that’s the proof. Constantine professed the faith but honored the gods of his past. Nevertheless, the emperor passed a cursory inspection by the bishops. How could that have happened?

Christians had suffered terrible persecution from the time of the inception of the faith in Jerusalem. When Constantine ended Rome’s violence against them, did the leaders close their eyes to his ungodly behavior? His imperial authority gave them what they’d wanted: personal safety, social acceptance, undisturbed lives. For whatever reason, they chose to defer to the emperor of Rome rather than to believe the Word of God with fear.

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The mandate had been, *Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* (See *Mat. 4:17*) But Constantine took another route, coordinating his plan for years. Though poorly conceived, his carefully designed deathbed experience included first naming his successors to the throne and then confessing his sins to receive baptism just before his death. For this, his personal priest was his constant companion. What seemed to work was not the way.

Those who'd suffer martyrdom as a result of the compromise were without blood on their hands, unlike the emperor and the misled bishops of the fourth century church who failed to realize the long-range effect of the empire on the Christian faith. Thus Mystery Babylon invaded the church that negotiated with Roman imperialism when its bishops denied the Word of God, deferring to the charm of Constantine. The ancient spirit of Babel entered with all her idolatry just as the persecution ended, and most churches blindly agreed.

Sixty years after the Council of Nicaea, world history took another significant turn when one bishop declared himself the sole ruler over all bishops and dominated the churches of the world from one seat—Rome, a declining empire. He called his institution, *catholic*, meaning “universal.” The Roman pope used the capital city as his home base, brandishing imperial-like authority over the rest. Only the Eastern church bishop resisted his presumption. Though a participant of the early councils, the Greek Orthodox pope remained independent from Rome.

The apostasy began when the bishops presumed they could change the words of God in 325. Over the centuries, the spiritual condition of the organized church became deplorable: jealousy and lust for authority superseded any desire to gain the humility or truth of Jesus Christ. Doctrines were adopted as *orthodox* by councils that were unspiritual, opinionated, and pagan.

Prior to these changes, the churches had only received their directives from the writings of the apostles under the guidance of each assembly or of a visiting bishop. The order of service included interaction by its attendants, unlike services today. (See 1 Cor. 14:23-40) Though believers had meditated on the Word and searched the Spirit for understanding, the fourth century bishops soon changed that. The state church grew to have the same arrogance that had crucified our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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When leaders took extreme measures to squelch what they considered heresies, the institutional church gained its notorious reputation of violence and injustice. Rationalizing their sins, church leaders turned from the power of the Holy Spirit. *Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?* (1 Cor. 5:6) [The leavened lump is a lump of dough, figuratively the brain.] The institutional church falsely taught salvation by rites, ceremonies, and works, creating their religious “school of thought” and commanding all to enroll.

The expression, “puffed up” is used by Paul six times to the church in Corinth. He challenged their boastfulness, one against another, though the gifts had come from God. The Corinthians seemed rich in gifts, but the apostles were spectacles, fools in the sight of others. They had been abased, not exalted, but the churches were deceived by trusting in worldly wisdom rather than the purity of Christ. Leaven in their minds influenced their behavior.

Paul made it clear: knowledge puffs up, but love builds up, not by flattery but by speaking the truth in love. Leaven, on the other hand, represents false teachings we receive, leading our carnal minds to pride: the Colossians were puffed up in their carnal minds. (Col 2:18) Are we proud in boasting about worldly things—our possessions, our knowledge, or our tolerance of sin? Leaven interrupts our love for God and for others.

Vain opinions are often received before they are tested by the Word of God. They might be reasonable to a worldly mind; however, if we believe what is false, how can we know what is true? If what we receive is not true, its deception makes us unclean. Will we look to our hope? *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* (1 Jn. 3:3)

Because the thoughts and ways of God are not like ours, the teachings of men that seem rational often contradict the Word. We might devise reasons to receive them, but rationalizations are unspiritual, and just a little leaven inflates the whole mind and directs the way we think.

The Spirit and the Word war against the mind of the flesh; if we study the Word by the Holy Spirit, He corrects our carnal way of thinking. Studying scriptures by believing, then receiving His inspired words, our spiritual minds open to His Spirit for our

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understanding. From our hearts to our minds, we see by His revelations.

The Lord spoke deep mysteries with simple words that all men could understand by faith in Him, but the geniuses couldn't comprehend as long as they depended on their minds without faith in the Holy Spirit. To this day, the key that unlocks the Bible is our faith.

An Elite Church

The scholars of Rome tell us common people shouldn't read the Bible because, if they can't figure it out, how could we who are not scholars possibly understand it? Do we see how the devil divided us by elitism in the church? Jesus Christ hates elitism! Its walls must come down for the church to be one in His Spirit. Who will bear the blame? Pride destroys the soul.

Have none of us sinned? Does no one fear God? But if we believe, we should understand what was written to believers, not to intellectuals! Are we so intelligent that we refuse to confess our sins? Then, we're not innocent of a great transgression; but perhaps, by humility and love, together we will win the day.

Today's apostasy did not happen overnight. Centuries after the first councils, popes and their cohorts added to their dogma while the integrity of the Bible was pushed aside. Men claimed the power to turn the church into an institution of bishops and archbishops, as well as *nunciatures*—ambassadors to nations on behalf of the Vatican, as if it were a little nation inside Italy. Imagine that!

The kingdom of Jesus Christ is not patterned by this world; it operates invisibly but is powerful to the tearing down of every word and every thought that rises up against the Word of God. Against powers and principalities, our Savior died for us; rising to justify us, He lives forever. His army has been called to holiness; warring for the truth, we take up the sword of His Word with the shield of our faith to defeat the same powers He defeated on behalf of mankind.

Men were pressed into spiritual servitude, forced against conscience to accept decisions of councils that reproached the Word by their carnal minds. Spirits of covetousness, deceit, and murder filled hypocrites who called themselves Christians. As

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with Lucifer, their atrocities were the inevitable fruit of pride; yet they continue to promote themselves, mostly unopposed.

Mother of God

The veneration of Mary began as early as the second century in Alexandria, Egypt. Though Roman dogma insists they do not worship Mary, rosaries and prayers to her testify against them. But Jesus taught us how to pray: *And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name ... (See Lk. 11:2; also Mat. 6:9)*

Mary is not the “Mother of God” any more than the pope is the “Holy Father,” but deception is rampant in the church of Rome. The young virgin conceived the Messiah as the Son of man, for she herself was mortal. Although the angel Gabriel declared to her that she was *highly favored (See Lk. 1:28)*, in fact, Mary is not often mentioned in the Scriptures. She described her gratitude to God for regarding *the lowly state of His handmaid. (See Lk. 1:48)* To exalt her as perfect, a woman born without a carnal nature, is a serious error. Seeking her presence elevates her as an object of prayer and petition—tantamount to idolatry.

The statues of the beautiful virgin and of Christ are adored for their aesthetic beauty, but the truth is, neither Mary nor Christ were outwardly attractive: *He had no form nor comeliness ... no beauty that we should desire him (Is 53:2b)*, and his mother must have been unattractive as well. Have we known how much it cost Him to be born of a woman?

⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple service, and the promises. ⁵ The ancestors are theirs, and from them, by physical descent, came the Messiah, who is God over all, praised forever. Amen.
(Romans 9:4-5 HCSB)

Mary was the mother of Yeshua’s mortal flesh but not of His eternal Spirit or essential Being. As Deity, the Word of the Father entered her seed; then the Word became His Son. Paul wrote that Jesus was *born of the seed of David according to the flesh* (See Rom 1:3). YHWH, unlimited as Spirit, made His Word

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His own Jewish Son, and the celestial universe rejoiced as they bowed with awe and wonder.

²⁰ Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. ²¹ When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." ...

³¹ Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

³³ "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.

³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:20-21, 31-35 NIV)

⁵⁴ Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. ⁵⁵ "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷ And they took offense at him. (Matthew 13:54-57 NIV)

An Immaculate Conception

In Nazareth, they knew who his brothers and sisters were. But the Roman church teaches the perpetual virginity of Mary, dogma the Bible does not confirm. Not declaring Joseph with children prior to his marriage to Mary, the Scriptures mention Jesus' brothers and sisters. Since the Bible is true, we know Mary was not a virgin after the birth of Jesus because it would have been a sin for Mary to keep herself from her husband. Wives and husbands are commanded to share their bodies with each other. Their physical union is the consummation of holy matrimony: God said, *they shall be one flesh* (See Gen. 2:24) before the fall of mankind in Eden; therefore, marital sex is not a sin.

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In 1854, Pope Pius IX⁸ declared the virgin Mary was born without original sin. In other words, in the nineteenth century, a pope declared for the first time in history that Mary was born sinless, without any inclination to sin, and further, that she lived a perfect life. The Scriptures do not support that teaching, yet another Roman church doctrine remains to this day, despite the Bible that declares Christ to be the only sinless One.

Mary was a virgin, which was necessary for God to beget a Son through mankind to save mankind. He had not chosen a virgin because virgins are sinless; rather, the angel told the virgin, she would bring forth the Son of God. Had she not been a virgin, she could not have known her baby was the Son of God.

Even so, Mary is not the focus of the Bible. God was in the Messiah-Christ, “Anointed One,” to reconcile believers to Himself; He is highly exalted, and no other gods are acknowledged.

Certainly, Mary was blessed among women; she was chosen by the extraordinary grace of God. In her words to Elizabeth, the woman of faith accepted her role as the birth mother of Messiah. At that time, she knew the child she’d bear would be her Savior:

⁴⁶ And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (Luke 1:46-47)

4 Beloved, every spirit believe not, but prove the spirits, if of God they are, because many false prophets have gone forth to the world; ² in this know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that doth confess Jesus Christ in the flesh having come, of God it is, ³ and every spirit that doth not confess Jesus Christ in the flesh having come, of God it is not; and this is that of the antichrist, which ye heard that it doth come, and now in the world it is already. ⁴ Ye—of God ye are, little children, and ye have overcome them; because greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:1-4 YLT, Literal translation) [He is in our flesh by His Spirit who indwells us.]

The Word of God entered carnal flesh exactly like ours for the divine purpose of conquering our temptations and setting us free from sin. Yeshua demonstrated the way to walk after the Spirit and not the flesh, looking to the cross, counting His flesh dead, He yielded His soul to the will of the Father’s Spirit.

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Even so, the Roman church reasoned that Jesus was without sin and therefore didn't struggle against our carnal flesh with its innate tendency toward iniquity. Their natural reasoning is faulty: His human nature caused the wilderness temptations; the Father predestined His Son for this. It was imperative that He be tempted as we are in order to become our compassionate High Priest. He conquered the flesh and finished the work, giving every believer His victory. Now we persevere, surrendering our lives to the Spirit by faith in His resurrection.

When we repent to receive God in the Savior, He sends His Spirit to live within our carnal bodies. The Spirit that caused His conception into carnal flesh enters us by grace through faith that makes us new creations; born of the Spirit. The old is gone, the new has come! God certainly lives in the body of the believer, even with its sinful nature, but He has already overcome it all in Christ! Now His Spirit empowers us to overcome as He did in Jesus, and He gives us His victory over the mortal nature, defeated by God in Jesus Christ.

His Holy Spirit at work in us delivers us from our sins, but if we don't believe it, we deny He took our sins away in Christ; yet if He took our sins away in Christ, then He overcomes our sins in us by our confidence in Him. By faith in Him we win!

⁹ But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. ... ¹¹ But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.
(Romans 8:9, 11)

The Roman church teaches that Jesus appeared to us in a body something like ours but without its sinful nature. The Vatican teaches that He was necessarily birthed by a virgin whose body was without sin. The dogma insists that in this way, Jesus came in sinless flesh. Popes have even imagined the virgin herself was immaculately conceived; the contrary is true: Mary's carnal nature was necessary for the mission of our Savior to succeed: a mortal body was required for Him to be the High Priest of mankind. Had He not come into this world in our flesh, He would not have been able to die, and His resurrection would

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be meaningless if He had never died. Furthermore His entrance into our flesh was essential for us to overcome our sinful nature by faith in Him. Otherwise there's no good news at all!

³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:3-4 NASB)

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. (Hebrews 4:15 NIV)

Had the Word not entered the exact *likeness of sinful flesh*, (*above*) He certainly would never have been tempted in every way as we are. If He was God in perfect flesh, how was He tempted by the devil? God is never tempted to sin; however, He sent His eternal Word as the Seed of God made flesh to be a man who was tempted just like us. YHWH did this to experience our struggle against the strength of the flesh, knowing that in the weakness of our weakest condition—for He was *like a root out of dry ground—the weakness of God is stronger than men!* (*See Is. 53:2; also 1 Cor. 1:25*)

This is how faith is put to the test: do we believe the Scriptures as they are written? then has the Word changed our lives, resulting in faith that works when it's tried by fire? The Lord never overstates the facts, but we must believe His words.

The cunningly persuasive devil convinces the hearts of men to believe that God came in a perfect and sinless body, and that while in perfect form, the devil tempted Him. That doctrine is blasphemous! As the Word, Yeshua's indestructible life wasn't dependent on His flesh but on His soul's perfect identification with the Father. His name is the expression of the Father's heart, for His Name is the Word of God. As He told His disciples, "*the flesh profits nothing.*" He subjected His flesh to the commands of the Father, and by His obedience, He is able to share His inheritance of everlasting life with all who walk in His Spirit.

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Today His risen body is perfect, free of temptations; however, initially God sent His Word as the Substitute for mortal man who could not overcome his enslavement to sin. The Word of God Himself was in Jesus, living the perfect life He had searched the world to find. He offered His only begotten Son as the eternal Sacrifice for sin; having lived the only perfect life, He did it from the inside out. As it is written, ... *the word of the LORD endures forever.* (See 1Pet. 1:25a; Read also Jn. 1:1-5, 6:63)

¹² Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. ¹³ Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: ¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (James 1:12-15)

Our proclivity to sin occurs because our flesh was conceived as mortal. Since we yield to temptation, our sins dissociate us from our holy and perfect Creator. Unlike carnal man, Messiah expressed His identity with words from God as the Prophet of a new covenant described by the prophets. His weakness was of the virgin's seed as the Son of man; but His godliness, by the Seed of the Father as the Son of God. His Word became His Son, so God became a man like us with His Word in His heart:

¹⁵ The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; ¹⁶ According to all that thou desirest of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. ¹⁷ And the LORD said unto me, They have well *spoken that* which they have spoken. ¹⁸ I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. ¹⁹ And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. (Deuteronomy 18:15-19)

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If an immortal body had been necessary, Messiah could have descended from heaven in one, but God sent His Holy Spirit to a virgin from David's line and begot His only Son. Thus He fulfilled His promise that a descendant of David would be seated on his "everlasting throne;" seemingly a paradox till the Sacrifice came and made the way for such a throne by His resurrection.

Now we take up our cross to follow Him, daily gaining His victories over our flesh by faith in the power of His Word within us. He has already been here—in this flesh, as a brother of the Jews. The good news is, He knows us from the inside out.

Sanctified ones live by their faith: what He did in our flesh He will do in us as we put our carnal nature to death. By our faith in His death and resurrection, each day He raises us to life by His Spirit and His Word. His life-giving Spirit proves His blood washed away our sins, forever justifying us who follow Him, walking in His Spirit. When we repent and believe in Jesus' death and resurrection, He sends His Spirit into our hearts to live as He did when He walked on earth.

Our faith is tested by trials that bring forth the fruit of patience to bear more fruit as we persevere. Now we die daily by faith in His power, and by tenacious faith, we overcome the temptations of our flesh.

His Word conquers sin and death in us as we practice yielding to Him and confessing the Scriptures. He conforms us to His likeness by His Spirit, living in us. His Spirit is the power of His life that's in His Word as He refines us with its fire.

⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: ⁹ Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ¹⁰ For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
(Romans 6:6-10)

¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has

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suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:17-18 NKJV)

[the gospel] ... ² which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, (Romans 1:2-5 NASB, brackets added)

What a mystery! God accomplished the unique, miraculous birth of His Word as His own Son, integrating the eternal with our temporal mortality. His thoughts and His ways are beyond our comprehension. He endured the greatest suffering and pain of any man, only for our redemption. Even angels increase in wisdom and understanding as they observe His love and grace expressed toward us.

About Titles

⁸ “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. ⁹ Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. ¹⁰ And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. ¹¹ But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:8-12 NKJV)

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”
(Romans 8:15 NASB)

Jesus told us not to address *anyone* as “Father,” referring to the impropriety of giving titles to spiritual mentors. He does not permit iconic leaders; we are brothers and sisters, but men deliberately disobey Him. Why do we refuse to obey God? Why do men guide the flock of Christ into sin? Who are they?

The title “pope” actually came from the word *papa, abba, or daddy*. The title, “Holy Father,” is presumptuous. No apostle

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called himself “The Holy Father!” The apostles and prophets would have cried out, “Blasphemy!”

Our Holy Father rules above powers and principalities in heaven and earth. He’ll judge men for the evil things they’ve done, especially when they lay claim to His glory or authority. The idolaters will be made mute like their carved statues.

“Pontifex Maximus”⁹ was a title first created by Rome’s second king, Numa Pompilia for Numa Marcius, the pagan high priest during the eighth century BC. The pagan priesthood of Rome had been called Pontifex Maximus for nearly a thousand years. Kings and emperors had ruled as pagan priests, claiming its title. Then Leo I, in a lofty state of mind, claimed the church crown as *Pontifex Maximus* [from Latin, lit. “Highest Bridge”, referred to a bridge across the Tiber where Romans offered sacrifices to their gods.]¹⁰ It had been a title of the papal office since the fourth century, but Pope Leo I¹¹ made it official in the fifth century. Written over the doors, entryways, and other areas of the Vatican, carved in stone, the pagan words remain in pagan Rome.

Recitations & Redundancy

⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Matthew 6:6-8 NIV)

Repetition is useless and wearisome to God and man. Prayer is communication with the only Holy Father by worship, praise, intercession, petition, and thanksgiving. By prayer we participate in a relationship with God, speaking to the Father as His children in Jesus’ name. Prayer might be silent meditation or audible speech; we might whisper or cry out in prayer. When we ask, we must believe He hears and will respond to us. *But without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb. 11:6a)* Words by rote while counting rosaries is no way to speak to our Father. Even our earthly fathers would consider us eccentric, certainly odd, if we approached them the same way.

The State Church

Prayers to Saints

Praying to our fellow believers is not the practice of those who trust in Jesus, and the exaltation of anyone other than God is blasphemous. Communication with the dead is necromancy—an abomination to God. We who believe exalt God in Jesus Christ.

²³ “And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. ²⁶ In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; ²⁷ for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. (John 16:23-27 NKJV)

The apostle John was caught up to heaven where he saw the mysteries and revelations that Jesus had received from the Father *to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.* (See Rev. 1:1-2 KJV) What an awesome God we serve! In Revelation, Chapter 19, John describes a messenger whose voice came from the throne in heaven:

⁵ And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. ⁶ And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. ⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. ⁹ And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they

Roman Catholic Dogma

which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. ¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See *thou do it* not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:5-10)

The sound that came from the messenger was the voice of a brother, a highly honored saint, who insisted, John must not bow before him! He must not pray to him or worship him. He must worship God. No saint was closer to God than this one whose voice came from the throne and commanded the beloved John to worship God alone.

Relics of the Saints ¹⁶

Italy's cathedrals are among the most beautiful in the world, and the touring visitor includes them on his sightseeing agenda. At Saint Peter's Basilica, the tomb of Peter is allegedly under the altar. The church of the pope, San Giovanni in Laterno and the adjacent Sancta Sanctorum (called the "Holy of Holies") hold relics, allegedly the skulls of Peter and Paul, wood from the table of the Last Supper, and even the holy umbilical cord!

In San Paulo are Paul's tomb and the chains he wore in prison before his martyrdom in Rome. Relics at San Croce in Gerusalemme are from the cross and crown of thorns; there's even the finger of doubting Thomas! At San Silvestro in Capite, the RCC preserves the head of John the Baptist. The mummified bodies of saints who died in catacombs are located in Sicily, but Rome has "the best catacombs,"¹⁷ with its many body parts of saints and relics of believers who were martyred there:

²⁹ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ and say, 'If we had been *living* in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in *shedding* the blood of the prophets.'

³¹ So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of *the guilt* of your fathers. ³³ You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? (Matthew 23:29-33 NASB) – Yeshua [Jesus]