

The Catholic Chronicles - by Keith Green

A 4 part series on the Roman Catholic Cult/Empire.

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THE CATHOLIC CHRONICLES

by Keith Green

CHRONICLE I

One might wonder why, in a scriptural expose of the doctrines of the Catholic Church, I would choose this subject The Roman Interpretation of the Lord's Supper (more commonly known as "Communion") for the first of the "Catholic Chronicles". Most Protestants (today, Protestants are considered to be members of any church or church-group outside the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox churches) would expect me to deal with what they might consider the more obvious departures from biblical foundation such as the worship of and prayers to the Virgin Mary, the infallibility of the pope, purgatory and prayers for the dead, the history of the torture and burning of accused "heretics" and such like that- and no doubt in future installments we shall look in-depth at each of these.

But for this first article I believe that we should get right to the root, before we begin exploring the branches of Roman Doctrine and practice. And any Catholic who has even a small knowledge of his church knows that the central focus of each gathering (known as the "mass") is the Holy Eucharist.

"THE EUCHARIST"

The word "Eucharist" is a Greek word that means "thanksgiving". In the gospel accounts of the Last Supper, Jesus is described as "giving thanks" before breaking the bread (Luke 22:19), and so this word became a proper name for the Lord's Supper in the early Catholic Church. Today, it is more commonly associated with the elements in communion, especially the host or "wafer", although the ceremony itself is still called "The Holy Eucharist".

Now, you might be wondering why I'm taking so much time and effort to explain something as harmless as the ceremony known around the world as communion. If you've ever been to church at all, (Protestant or Catholic), you've probably taken part in a communion service. So why make all this fuss about bread and wine? Why? Because that's where the similarity between evangelical communion services and the Roman Catholic Mass ends- at the bread and the wine!

"TRANSUBSTANTIATION"

That 18-letter word above is a complete theological statement. . . and the name of a doctrine, out of which springs the most astounding set of beliefs and practices that has ever been taught in the name of religion. Very, very few people know what the Catholic Church actually believes and teaches concerning this subject. and I am convinced that even fewer Catholics realize themselves what they are taking part in. From earliest childhood, "This is the body of Christ" is all they've ever heard when the priest gingerly placed the wafer on their tongue. And as they grew up it was so natural and part of normal religious life, that their minds never even questioned the fact that Jesus Christ, Himself, was actually in their mouth!

It might be hard for you to believe, but that's exactly, literally, what "transubstantiation" means. The Roman Catholic Church teaches their flocks that the bread and the wine used in the Mass actually, physically, turns into the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ after the priest blesses it during the liturgy (ceremony).

Although this in itself might shock you, it is really only the beginning. For the implications and practical conclusions of this doctrine are absolutely mind-boggling.

"EXCLUSIVE AUTHORITY"

For example, the Roman Church teaches that since their priests are the only ones who have the authority from God to pronounce the blessing which changes

the elements of communion into the actual body and blood of Jesus, that they are the only church where Jesus "physically resides" even now! Let me quote a letter written to one of the girls in our ministry from a devoted Catholic:

"To explain the Catholic Church would take volumes, but basically the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ when He was here on earth. It is the only church founded by Jesus. The greatest asset of our church is that we have Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist. He is really here, body, soul and divinity. He is God and in His omnipotence can do anything He wishes, and He decided to remain with us until the end of the world in the form of the host (the "wafer") in Holy Communion."

If you think this is just the isolated opinion of someone on the fringe of the church, or that the Catholic Church as a whole does not really believe or teach this, I beg you to read on. For not only is this the official teaching of Rome, but according to irreversible church decree (called dogma), anyone who does not hold to this belief, in the most explicit detail, is accursed and damned forever!

"THE COUNCIL OF TRENT"

When Europe was electrified by the eloquent preaching of the sixteenth century Reformation, the Roman Catholic hierarchy gathered together. Her

theologians worked for three decades on the preparation of a statement of faith concerning transubstantiation. This document remains, to this day, the standard of Catholic doctrine.

As the Second Vatican Council commenced in 1963, Pope John XXIII declared, "I do accept entirely all that has been decided and declared at the Council of Trent". What did the Council of Trent decide and declare?

Some of the first sections are as follows:

Canon I: "If any one shall deny that the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore entire Christ, are truly, really, and substantially contained in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist; and shall say that He is only in it as a sign, or in a figure, let him be accursed!"

Canon II: "If any one shall say that the substance of the bread and wine remains in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist, together with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ...let him be accursed!"

Canon III: "If any one shall say that Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is not to be adored in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, even with the open worship of Latria, and therefore not to be venerated with any peculiar festal celebrity, nor to be solemnly carried about in processions according to the praiseworthy and universal rites and customs of the Holy Church, and that He is not to be publicly set

before the people to be adored, and that His adorers are idolaters- let him be accursed! "

"THE WORSHIP OF THE HOST"

"You shall not make unto you any engraved image. . . You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them..."

The 2nd commandment (Ex.20:4-5)

"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:23

In Canon VI, a rite of worship called "Latria" was spoken of. This is not just an "ancient custom", it is thoroughly practiced today in every Mass. After the bread has been supposedly "changed" into Christ by the priest, it is placed in a holder called the monstrance. And before this monstrance the Catholic must bow and worship (this act is called "genuflecting") the little wafer as God! Sometimes they have processions where they solemnly march, as the congregation bows and offers praise and worship to this piece of bread!

The Roman teaching that Jesus Christ is physically present in each morsel of bread creates many other doctrinal and practical problems. For instance, when the service is over, what happens to all those leftover wafers that have been "changed into Christ"? Do they change back into bread again when the priest goes

home? I'm afraid not. For according to Canon IV of the Council of Trent, they stay flesh! And don't think that 400 year-old decree is just some dusty old manuscript in a museum case somewhere. It still is completely adhered to and passionately practiced. As an example, here is a passage from an official Catholic home instruction book, copyrighted 1978:

"Jesus Christ does not cease to exist under the appearances of bread and wine after the Mass is over. Furthermore, some hosts are usually kept in all Catholic churches. In these hosts, Jesus is physically and truly present, as long as the appearances of bread remain. Catholics therefore have the praiseworthy practice of 'making visits' to our Lord present in their churches to offer Him their thanks, their adoration, to ask for help and forgiveness; in a word, to make Him the center around which they live their daily lives.' ('The Spirit of Jesus" Catholic Home Study Instruction Course, Book #3, p. 92.) That is an incredible interpretation of how to make Jesus the center of your daily life!

"WHEN DID THIS TEACHING BEGIN?"

The teaching of transubstantiation does not date back to the Last Supper as most Catholics suppose. It was a controversial topic for many centuries before officially becoming an article of faith (which means that it is essential to salvation according to Rome). The idea of a physical presence was vaguely held by

some, such as Ambrose, but it was not until 831 A.D. that Paschasius Radbertus, a Benedictine Monk, published a treatise openly advocating the doctrine. Even then, for almost another four centuries, theological war was waged over this teaching by bishops and people alike, until at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D., it was officially defined and canonized as a dogma (A "Dogma" is a teaching or doctrine that can never be reversed or repealed. It is equal in authority to the Bible) by Pope Innocent III.

The historian Tertullian tells us that when this doctrine first began to be taught in the Middle Ages, that the priests took great care that no crumb should fall lest the body of Jesus be hurt, or even eaten by a mouse or a dog! There were quite serious discussions as to what should be done if a person were to vomit after receiving the sacrament. At the Council of Constance, it was argued that if a communicant spilled some of the blood on his beard, both beard and the man should be destroyed by burning! (The Other Side of Rome, p. 21) (By the end of the eleventh century, lest someone should spill God's blood, some in the church began to hold back the cup from the people, and finally in 1415, the Council of Constance officially denied the cup to laymen. Although today, by decree of the Vatican, churches may now offer the cup optionally to communicants.)

"HOW ROME VIEWS THE BIBLE"

Before we proceed to look at what the Bible has to say on this subject, it is important to understand the official Catholic view of the Scriptures. According to unquestionable decree, they hold that "Church tradition has equal authority with the Bible". This is not just a theological view, but it was made an article of faith by the same Council of Trent in 1545! And again, this view is completely held by the Church today:

"The teachings of the Church will always be in keeping with the teachings of the Scripture. . . and it is through the teaching of the Church that we understand more fully truths of sacred Scripture. To the Catholic Church belongs the final word in the understanding and meaning of the Holy Spirit in the words of the Bible."

And explaining the premise used in interpreting the Bible: "...usually the meaning of the Scriptures is sought out by those who are specially trained for this purpose. And in their conclusions, they know that no explanation of the Scriptures which contradicts the truths constantly taught by the infallible Church can be true." ("The Spirit of Jesus" Catholic Home Study Instruction Course, Book #3, pp. 94-95.)

Any thinking person can see how such a mode of interpretation can be dangerously used to manipulate Scripture to mean absolutely anything at all! Who has

not observed this of the various cults? The Moonies, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses all back up their false teachings with "new revelations" and "inspired interpretations" of the Scriptures each claiming that the Holy Spirit revealed these new truths to their founders. One opens themselves to all kinds of deception when they judge the Bible by what their church or pastor teaches, instead of judging what their church or pastor teaches by the Bible!

"CATHOLIC PROOF-TEXTS EXPLAINED"

With this in mind, we will briefly discuss the two main passages of Scripture that the Roman Church uses while trying to show that Jesus Himself, taught transubstantiation.

John 6:54-55: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink."

Catholics are taught here, that Jesus is explaining how He is literally offering them His flesh and blood, so that they may have eternal life by physically eating Him. With just a little study of the whole passage (vs. 27-71), it is clear that Jesus was not talking about physical, but spiritual food and drink.

Food is eaten to satisfy hunger. And in verse 35 Jesus says, "He who comes to Me shall never

hunger". Now, Jesus is not promising eternal relief from physical hunger pains. He is, of course, speaking of the spiritual hunger in man for righteousness and salvation. And He promises to those who will "come to Him " that He will satisfy their hunger for these things forever therefore, to come to Him is to "eat"! (See also Matt. 5:6, 11:28, John 4:31-34.)

We drink also to satisfy thirst, and again in verse 35 Jesus tells us, "He that believes on Me shall never thirst." Therefore, to believe on Him is to "drink"! (See also John 4:13-14.) No one can say that here Jesus was establishing the eating and drinking of His literal flesh and blood to give eternal life, for in verse 63 He says, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Thus Jesus makes clear what we should be eating and drinking to have eternal life! (See also Matt.4:4.)

Matt. 26:26 and 28: "This is My body . . . this is My blood." Catholics base their whole religious system on their interpretation of these two verses. They adamantly teach that right here, Jesus is pronouncing the first priestly blessing that mysteriously changes the bread and wine into His body and blood. The absolute folly of such a conclusion is proved by this one observation: He was literally still there before, during, and after they had partaken of the bread and

the cup! He was not changed into some liquid and bread- His flesh was still on His bones, and His blood still in His veins. He had not vanished away to reappear in the form of a piece of bread or a cup of wine! Let's look closer at His words. No one can deny that here we have figurative language. Jesus did not say "touto gignetai" ("this has become" or "is turned into"), but "touto esti" ("this signifies, represents" or "stands for") (the New Testament was written in Greek). It is obvious that Jesus' meaning was not literal but symbolic! And He wasn't the first in the Bible to claim figuratively that a glass of liquid was really "blood".

One time, David's friends heard him express a strong desire for water from the well of Bethlehem. In spite of extreme danger, these men broke through the enemy lines of the Philistines and brought the water to him. When David found out that these men had risked their lives in this way, he refused to drink the water, exclaiming, "Is not this the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" (II Sam. 23:17).

Throughout the gospels we find similar metaphorical language:

Jesus referring to Himself as "the Door", "the Vine", "the Light", "the Root", "the Rock", "the Bright and Morning Star", as well as "the Bread". The passage is written with such common language that it is plain to any observant reader that the Lord's Supper was

intended primarily as a memorial and in no sense a literal sacrifice. "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19).

"TRUE PAGAN ORIGINS"

Where did this teaching and practice really come from? Like many of the beliefs and rites of Romanism, transubstantiation was first practiced by pagan religions. The noted historian Durant said that belief in transubstantiation as practiced by the priests of the Roman Catholic system is "one of the oldest ceremonies of primitive religion" (The Story of Civilization, p. 741.) The syncretism and mysticism of the Middle East were great factors in influencing the West, particularly Italy. (Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius, by Dill.) In Egypt, priests would consecrate food cakes which were supposed to become the flesh of Osiris! (an ancient Egyptian god of the lower world and judge of the dead - Encyclopedia of Religions, Vol. 2, p. 76.) The idea of transubstantiation was also characteristic of the religion of Mithra whose sacraments of cakes and haoma drink closely parallel Catholic Eucharistic rites. (Ibid.)

The idea of eating the flesh of deity was most popular among the people of Mexico and Central America long before they ever heard of Christ; and when Spanish missionaries first landed in those countries, "their surprise was heightened, when they witnessed

a religious rite which reminded them of communion . .
. an image made of flour...and after consecration by
priests, was distributed among the people who ate it. .
. declaring it was the flesh of deity. (Prescott's Mexico,
Vol. 3.)

"SO WHY DO THEY TEACH IT?"

Before concluding our first chronicle, the question
needs to be asked, "Why does the Roman Catholic
Church need to have such a doctrine. Why do they
think that Jesus needs them to physically eat Him?
That is what truly puzzled me as I read astounded
through the catechism and doctrinal instruction books.
But the answer to that question is not a pretty one. As
I said before, the implications and practical
conclusions of the teaching of transubstantiation are
substantially worse than the doctrine itself and like a
great web spun by an industrious spider, Rome's
teachings spiral out from this central hub like the
spokes of a wheel.

In the following Catholic Chronicle we will look intently
at the next direct result of transubstantiation in official
Catholic systematic theology: "The Sacrifice of the
Mass".

CHRONICLE II

In Chronicle I, we thoroughly examined the doctrine of

transubstantiation its history, practice, and real meaning. But we have waited for this second article to answer the question: Why? Why must there be present in the Mass the literal body and blood of Jesus? What purpose does it serve?

The answer is found in these startling words: "The sacrifice of the Mass is the same sacrifice of the cross, for there is the same priest, the same victim, and the same offering." ("The Roman Catholic Sacrifice of the Mass" by Bartholomew F. Brewer, Ph.D.)

And in the words of Pope Pius IV...

"I profess likewise that in the mass there is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory (conciliatory, to soothe the anger of, to win or regain the goodwill of, to appease, placate or make friendly, to reconcile - Webster's New World Dictionary and Harper's Bible Dictionary.) sacrifice for the living and the dead."
(From the fifth article of the creed of Pope Pius IV.)

That is the incredible truth! The Roman Catholic Church believes and teaches that in every Mass, in every church, throughout the world (estimated at up to 200,000 Masses a day) that Jesus Christ is being offered up again, physically, as a sacrifice for sin (benefitting not only those alive, but the dead as well!) ("It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" Heb. 9:27.) Every Roman Mass is a re-

creation of Jesus' death for the sins of the world. Not a symbolic re-creation! But a literal, actual offering of the flesh and blood of the Lord to make daily atonement for all the sins that have been daily committed since Jesus was crucified almost 2,000 years ago ("The Catholic Home Instruction Book", #3, P. 90.).

That's why the elements must become physically Jesus' body and blood, so that they can be once again offered for sin:

"The Holy Eucharist is the perpetual continuation of this act of sacrifice and surrender of our Lord. When the Lord's Supper is celebrated, Christ again presents Himself in His act of total surrender to the Father in death." ("The Spirit of Jesus" pp.89-90, Imprimatur: John Joseph Cardinal Carberry, Archbishop of St. Louis.)

"He offers Himself continually to the Father, in the same eternal act of offering that began on the cross and will never cease." ("Sons of God in Christ" Book 4, P. 117.)

"The Mass is identical to Calvary it is a sacrifice for sin it must be perpetuated to take away sin." (For Them Also, pp.289-299.)

The catechism of the Council of Trent required all pastors to explain that not only did the elements of the

Mass contain flesh, bones and nerves as a part of Christ, "But also a WHOLE CHRIST". (Encyclopedia of Religions, Vol. 2, p.77.) Thus it is referred to as "the sacrifice of the Mass" and as "a renewal of the sacrifice of the cross"! ("A Catholic Word List" p. 45.)

"THE COUNCIL OF TRENT ON "THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS""

As we shared in Chronicle I, the Council of Trent was called to clarify and standardize Catholic doctrine in response to the challenges of the Reformation. The canons on this subject (passed in Session XXII. Cap II.) are as follows:

"If any one shall say, that in the Mass there is not offered to God a true and proper sacrifice, or that what is offered is nothing else than Christ given to be eaten, let him be anathema." (Anathema- The strongest denunciation of a person that can be made in the ancient Greek (the original language of the New Testament). Literal meaning: "devoted to death". A thing or person accursed or damned. -- Webster's New World Dictionary and Harper's Bible Dictionary.)

"If any one shall say that in these words, 'This do in remembrance of Me', Christ did not make the apostles priests, or did not ordain that they themselves and other priests should offer His body and blood, let him be anathema."

"If any one shall say that the sacrifice of the Mass is

only of praise and thanksgiving, or a bare commemoration of the sacrifice performed on the cross, but not propitiatory; or that it is of benefit only to the person who takes it, and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities, let him be accursed."

"If any one shall say that a blasphemy is ascribed to the most holy sacrifice of Christ performed on the cross by the sacrifice of the Mass let him be accursed."

"BUT IS THIS THE BELIEF OF ROME TODAY?"

If any be in doubt as to the modern Roman position, we shall quote the recent (1963-65) Second Vatican Council:

"At the Last Supper. . . our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His body and blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross. . ."
p. 154, The Documents of Vatican II, Walter M. Abbott, S.J.

The catechism books teach that the reason the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of Calvary is because the victim in each case was Jesus Christ. ("The New Baltimore Catechism" #3, Question 931.) In fact, they refer to the bread of the Eucharist as the "host", which is the Latin word *hostia* which literally means "victim" (Webster's New World Dictionary.)

BUT WHY "THE SACRIFICE" OF THE MASS?

We will now quote the Church's own contemporary literature to fully answer this question (taken from the book, *This Is The Catholic Church*, published by the Catholic Information Service, Knights of Columbus, Imprimatur: (sanction or approval. Specifically, permission to print or publish a book or article containing nothing contrary to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church - Webster's New World Dictionary.) Most Reverend John F. Whealon, Archbishop of Hartford:

"Sacrifice is the very essence of religion. And it is only through sacrifice that union with the Creator can be perfectly acquired. It was through sacrifice that Christ Himself was able to achieve this for man. It is only through the perpetuation of that sacrifice that this union may be maintained.

"What makes the Mass the most exalted of all sacrifices is the nature of the victim, Christ Himself. For the Mass is the continuation of Christ's sacrifice which He offered through His life and death. Jesus then, is the priest, the offerer of the sacrifice. But Christ was not only the priest of this sacrifice (of the cross), He was also the victim, the very object itself of this sacrifice.

"The Mass is thus the same as the sacrifice of the cross. No matter how many times it is offered, nor in

how many places at one time, it is the same sacrifice of Christ. Christ is forever offering Himself in the Mass." (pp. 20-24.)

BUT JESUS SAID "IT IS FINISHED!"

Every true believer loves the sound of these words: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). For it is the wonderful exclamation that the Lord's suffering was finally over- He had fulfilled His mission! Jesus had lived a life of sorrow, bearing the burden of a world gone mad. He had been rejected by everyone, even His closest friends. He had lived a perfect life before men and God, and His reward on earth was to be laughed at, spit upon, beaten beyond recognition, and finally nailed to a cross. But He had submitted willingly, because it was the will of His Father to offer Him as the satisfaction of the penalty for all the sin in the world past, present and future!

But here, in the words of a Roman Catholic priest, is the "true meaning" of the words "it is finished!" These words do not declare that His sacrifice was finished, but that He had finished His former, normal, earthly life and was now fixed in the state of a victim...He then began His everlasting career as the perpetual sacrifice of the new law." ("The Sacrifice of Christ" by Fr. Richard W. Grace.) Hence, according to Rome, Jesus must be forever dying for sin, "perpetually".

Have you ever wondered why in every Catholic

Church they still have Jesus up on the cross? Every crucifix with Jesus portrayed as nailed to it, tells the whole Catholic story- Jesus is still dying for the sins of the world! But that's a lie! We need only look to the Scriptures to see the truth.

"BACK TO THE BOOK"

The epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the "once for all" sacrifice of Christ on the cross, not a daily sacrifice on altars. The Bible repeatedly affirms in the clearest and most positive terms that Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was complete in that one offering. And that it was never to be repeated is set forth explicitly in Hebrews, chapters 7, 9 and 10:

"Who needs not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: For this He did once, when He offered up Himself" (7:27). "...by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (9:12). "Nor yet that He should offer Himself often. . . but now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. . . so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto those who look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (9:25-28). ". . . we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but

this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for the sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God. . .for by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified" (10:10-14).

Notice that throughout these verses occurs the statement "once for all" which shows how perfect, complete and final Jesus' sacrifice was! His work on the cross constituted one historic event which need never be repeated and which in fact cannot be repeated. As Paul says, "Christ, being raised from the dead dies no more" (Romans 6:9). Any pretense of a continuous offering for sin is worse than vain, it is blasphemy and true fulfillment of the Scripture, "Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:6).

"JESUS THE ONLY PRIEST"

Jesus not only became the perfect sacrifice for sin, but after being accepted by God as having totally fulfilled the requirements of the old covenant, He became "the mediator of a better covenant" (Heb. 8:6). That means that Jesus is the high priest of every true believer! "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ" (I Tim. 2:5).

The Bible teaches that the priesthood of Jesus Christ is unique "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 7:17.) ". . . because He abides forever, (He) holds His priesthood

permanently" (which means that it cannot be transferred to another!) (Heb. 7 17. 24).

But Roman Catholicism teaches that the apostles were ordained by Jesus Himself (at the Last Supper) to perpetuate the coming sacrifice He would make on the cross. And that this ordination has been handed down through the centuries to the current generation of priests. Therefore, Rome teaches that her priests actually operate and discharge the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and that they are called "other Christs" (alter Christus, in Latin.)

This explains the great adulation and honor heaped upon the Roman priest. The French Catholic Saint J.B.M. Vianney said that "Where there is no priest there is no sacrifice, and where there is no sacrifice there is no religion . . . without the priest the death and passion of our Lord would be of no avail to us. . . see the power of the priest! By one word from his lips, he changes a piece of bread into a God! A greater feat than the creation of a world." He also said, "If I were to meet a priest and an angel, I would salute the priest before saluting the angel. The angel is a friend of God, but the priest holds the place of God. . . next to God Himself, the priest is everything!" What humiliation for Jesus Christ, the One who has been given a name "above all other names!"

"BUT ISN'T ROME CHANGING?"

Today, many are expressing hope that Rome is turning toward scriptural Christianity. They point to the many reforms of Vatican II (that is, Such as Masses performed in the common language rather than exclusively in Latin, the relaxation of taboos such as eating food on Friday, etc.) and also to the ever-widening charismatic renewal. True, these things appear to be a positive sign of change, and many are thrilled by them; but most fail to realize that these changes are only superficial. For Rome could never reject the sacrifice of the Mass- just streamline it enough to keep the truth of its meaning hidden. Pope John XXIII made it clear that His Church is bound "to all the teachings of the Church in its entirety and preciseness, as it still shines forth in the act of the Council of Trent and First Vatican Council..." (The Documents of Vatican II, Abbott, S.J.)

It is clear that the whole of Roman teaching and belief is founded on this premise of the continual sacrifice of Christ for sin:

"It should be easy to see why the Mass holds such an important place in the Church's life. The Mass is the very essence of the Church. Within it the Church's life, and the Church's very existence is centered. If there were no mass, there could be no Catholic Church. The Mass is our act of worship, an act which we know to be really worthy of God, because it is the sacrifice of God's own Son.

"What the sacrifices of the old law were unable to accomplish- what no other form of human worship can accomplish- the Mass performs: Perfect atonement is made for sin.

"The souls of men yet unborn, together with those now living and those who have come into existence since Christ's sacrifice, all have need of the salvation which Christ has won for us. It is through the Mass as well as through the other sacraments that the effects of Christ's salvation are applied to the souls of men."
(This is the Catholic Church pp. 24-25.)

It is made thoroughly clear that Rome will forever put its faith in the Mass for the eternal forgiveness of sins. To remove this belief from her system of theology, would be like knocking out the pillars of a great edifice- the whole building would come tumbling down!

"PAUL'S EXTREME WARNING"

As I sat stunned, reading all the "Let them be accursed" threats of the Council of Trent, I could not help but think how their curses would only fall back on their own heads for the words of our brother Paul call out across the centuries:

"But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed!" (Gal.

1:8).

Not only does Paul warn that an authentic angel from heaven should not be heeded while preaching a "different doctrine", but he gives the ultimate warning ". . . even though we"! Paul strictly warned the Galatians, not even to listen to him- the chief apostle and master of true doctrine- if he should reverse himself on any of the fundamental teachings of the gospel. How much more then, should we reject the appalling traditions and practices of a system that is not only unbiblical, but is actually steeped in mysticism, bordering dangerously on the occult!

CONCLUSION: THE DEFINITION OF A "CULT"

Now I am sure, many of you who have been reading this, might have been wondering if (and when) I would use this word. Today, the word "cult" is thrown around without much thought. People seem much too eager to use it to describe any individual or group that doesn't exactly agree with them. And I do not, and will not use the word lightly. But as far as I can see from the Bible, a person is only in danger of being grouped with "false brethren" by tampering with three very basic issues of biblical truth. (These are greatly condensed for this example.)

Who Jesus is- Son of God, God the Son, Creator of the Universe.

What He came to do- to die once for all, for the sins of mankind, then raise from the dead as the eternal high priest of all true believers.

How a person directly benefits from Christ's death for sin- he is accounted as righteous through a total faith and rest in the finished work of Christ, and becomes the possessor of God's free gift eternal life (salvation).

The Roman Catholic Church has been considered a true Christian faith, mainly because it is generally known that their theology is quite orthodox on point #1. But as we have pointed out in these two chronicles, they are perilously shaky on the atonement Christ's substitutionary death for sinners #2. But if there is any doubt left at all, as to whether or not the Roman Church is authentically and biblically Christian, there will be a complete and thorough study of the Roman view on how one obtains salvation in our third installment of "The Catholic Chronicles".

CHRONICLE III

". . . the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 6:23)

How blessed it is to know Jesus! His love, His mercy, His righteousness, His forgiveness! He has promised to "cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic.

7:19) and to separate us from our sins "as far as the east is from the west!" (Ps. 103:12).

This is the good news! (That's the literal meaning of the word "gospel" good news!) That is what the true church of our God has the privilege of proclaiming... "liberty to the captives.!" (Lk.4:18).

The reason I begin this article on the Roman Catholic view of salvation with such rejoicing in my Savior, is because I have just finished reading a mountain of official (Roman) church literature on the subject, and I can honestly say, I have never had such joy in my heart of hearts about the finished work of Christ. As I scoured each page and read of penance, confession, venial and mortal sins, indulgences, purgatory, etc. I then had the infinite pleasure of searching the Scriptures to see what they had to say on these fundamental Catholic doctrines.

Oh what relief my soul found in the Scriptures! What holy joy! What clarity of light I saw, as the simple brilliance of God's mercy shown into my mind. If there is anything more beautiful than God's love and patience with man, it has never been revealed to mortals!

All this to say that I am bogged down with the information I have accumulated, and I will probably have to cover it all in this, Chronicle III, briefly

touching on each subject, while always coming back to the main question: "According to Rome, how can a man or woman be saved from the consequences of his sinful nature and actions, and how can they gain assurance that they are in a right standing before God?"

If the future permits, I will come back in another installment and cover some of these subjects (particularly, purgatory and indulgences) in far greater depth and detail. It is our desire to see people find the true salvation that Jesus died for; therefore, we must deal with that great (and most important) subject wholly, before taking the time to supply other necessary (and most revealing) subject matter.

"The Catholic Teaching on Sin"

Before we can understand what Catholics are taught about salvation, we must first see what they are taught they need to be saved from. In Matt. 1, the angel of the Lord speaks to Joseph in a dream about his betrothed, Mary, saying "she will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins" (vs. 21).

Today, many evangelicals toss around the term "saved" without much thought. "When did you get saved?" someone might ask. It's almost like a title, or a badge that a person wears to prove that he's become part of the club the "saved". Others are under

the impression that when a person talks of being "saved", they are talking about being saved from many different things sickness, death, the devil, hell, etc. But when the angel of the Lord used that precious word to prophesy that Jesus would fulfill all the predictions of the prophets, he made very clear what Jesus was coming to save His people from...their sins!

In official Roman Catholic theology, this too is the main thing that people are taught they need to be saved from- their sins. But the only thing that Catholic and evangelical teachings have in common on the subject of sin...is the spelling! For when a Catholic talks about his "sins", you must find out first if he is talking about "mortal" sins, or "venial" sins. And then you must ask him "how do you get rid of them?" The answer given will most likely confound a non-Catholic. For words like "faith", "repentance", even "Jesus" will usually be missing in the answer. Instead, a whole new list of other words will have to be learned, defined, and understood before the evangelical can fully grasp how a Catholic is taught his sins (and the penalty due them) can be canceled out.

"Mortal and Venial Sins"

The first of these unfamiliar words are the names of the two groups Rome has separated all sins into. Now if you're a Catholic, you might be wondering why I'm making such a big deal of the dividing of sins into two

distinct categories (each with their own set of consequences and remedies) for it has been part of Catholic doctrine for a long, long time.

According to Rome's definition, mortal sin is described as "any great offense against the law of God" and is so named because "it is deadly, killing the soul and subjecting it to eternal punishment". Venial sins, on the other hand, are "small and pardonable offenses against God, and our neighbor". Unlike mortal sins, venial sins are not thought to damn a soul to hell, but with the committing of each venial sin, a person increases his need for a longer stay in the purifying fires of a place called "purgatory". (Look that word up in your Bible dictionary you'll find it right next to "venial"!)

Now, there is no agreement among the priests as to which sins are mortal and which are venial, but they all proceed on the assumption that such a distinction does exist. The method of classification is purely arbitrary. What is venial according to one may be mortal according to another.

According to Rome, the pope is infallible in matters of faith and doctrine. He should then be able to settle this important matter by accurately cataloging those sins which are mortal as distinguished from those which are venial. However, there are some definites in the "mortal" category: blatantly breaking one of the

ten commandments, practically all sexual offenses (whether in word, thought or deed) and a long list of transgressions which have changed throughout the centuries.

For instance, until Vatican II (a church council that met between 1963-1965) it was a mortal sin to attend a Protestant church, to own or read a Protestant Bible, or to eat food on Friday! Oh, and it's still a mortal sin to "miss Mass on Sunday morning ("Sunday obligation" can also be fulfilled by attending a Saturday evening Mass) without a good excuse" (which means that considerably more than half of the claimed Roman Catholic membership throughout the world is constantly in mortal sin!) Venial sins include things like thinking bad thoughts, having wrong motives, losing your temper, etc. things that do not necessarily "lead into actual sin" but still, nevertheless, are sins that need to be eradicated in some way.

"What Does the Bible Say?"

The Bible makes no distinction between mortal and venial sins. There is in fact, no such thing as a venial sin. ALL SIN IS MORTAL! It is true that some sins are worse than others, but it is also true that all sins if not forgiven bring death to the soul. The Bible simply says: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). And Ezekiel says: "The soul that sins, it shall die" (18:4).

James says that "whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all" (2:10). He meant, not that the person who commits one sin is guilty of all other kinds of sin, but that even one sin unatoned for, shuts a person completely out of heaven and subjects him to punishment, just as surely as one mis-step by the mountain climber plunges him to destruction in the canyon below.

In the light of these biblical statements, the distinction between mortal and venial sins is shown to be completely absurd. In fact, the very act of classifying sins into "greater and lesser" is immoral in itself. We know how quick human nature is to grasp at any excuse for sin. Rome seems to be saying "these sins are really bad! But those? Well . . . you can get away with a few of them and not really suffer too much".

Speaking of

"getting away" with something, let's get right down to how Rome teaches you can "get rid of" your sins.

"Confession"

The Catholic system starts to get real complicated when we begin to look at the ways one can erase both their mortal and venial sins. "Two kinds of punishment are due to mortal sin: eternal (in hell forever), and temporal (in purgatory). Eternal punishment is canceled by either baptism (which is only allowed once in a person's life--and if a person were to die immediately after baptism, Rome says he

will go "straight to heaven". Otherwise, the only other conditions by which a Catholic may be assured he will go directly to heaven immediately upon death, is to die a "saint" -- a completely perfect and sanctified person, or to die a martyr's death. All others must do some time in purgatory.) or confession to a priest."

The Baltimore Catechism defines confession as follows: "Confession is the telling of our sins to an authorized priest for the purpose of attaining forgiveness." The important words here are "authorized priest". And to be genuine, a confession must be heard, judged, and followed by obedience to the authorized priest as he assigns a penance, such as good works, prayers, fastings, abstinence from certain pleasures, etc. A penance may be defined as "a punishment undergone in token of repentance for sin, as assigned by the priest" usually a very light penalty.

The New York Catechism says, "I must tell my sins to the priest so that he will give me absolution (release from punishment; acquittal; remission of sins declared officially by a priest--Webster's Dictionary.) A person who knowingly keeps back a mortal sin in confession commits a dreadful sacrilege, and he must repeat his confession."

"The Priest's Role"

Canon law 888 says: "The priest has to remember

that in hearing confession he is a judge." And the book, Instructions for Non-Catholics says: "A priest does not have to ask God to forgive your sins. The priest himself has the power to do so in Christ's name. Your sins are forgiven by the priest the same as if you knelt before Jesus Christ and told them to Christ Himself." (p. 93).

"The priest forgives the guilt of mortal sins which saves the penitent from going to hell, but he cannot remit the penalty due for those sins, and so the penitent must atone for them by performance of good works which he prescribes. The penitent may be, and usually is, interrogated by the priest so that he or she may make a full and proper confession. Stress is placed on the fact that any sin not confessed is not forgiven, any mortal sin not confessed in detail is not forgiven, and that the omission of even one sin (mortal) may invalidate the whole confession. Every loyal Roman Catholic is required under pain of mortal sin to go to confession at least once a year. But even after a penitent has received pardon, a large, but unknown amount of punishment remains to be suffered in purgatory." (The doctrine of purgatory rests on the assumption that while God forgives sin, His justice nevertheless demands that the sinner must suffer the full punishment due to him for his sin before he will be allowed to enter heaven.)

Technically, venial sins need not be confessed since

they are comparatively light and can be canceled by good works, prayers, extreme unction (one of the seven sacraments also known as "anointing of the sick" or "the last rites", and administered when a person is near death.) etc., but the terms are quite elastic and permit considerable leeway on the part of the priest. It is generally advised that it is safer to confess supposed venial sins also since the priest alone is able to judge accurately which are mortal and which are venial. The Baltimore Catechism says: "When we have committed no mortal sins since our last confession, we should confess our venial sins or some sin told in a previous confession for which we are again sorry, in order that the priest may give us absolution" (p. 329). What chance has a poor sinner against such a system as that?

As an example, a minister friend of mine who was brought up in the Catholic Church, tells the story of how his older brother went to confession every single week and confessed the same sin to the same priest and was given the same penance in order to receive absolution. This went on week after week, year after year. One day, while on a trip away from home, he decided that he would not break his pattern of going to weekly confession, so he went to another Catholic Church in the city he was visiting. He went into the confession box and confessed the same sin to a different priest. He began with "forgive me Father for I have sinned", and then began confessing the sin once

again, but this time he was shocked when the priest said: "But my son, that's not a sin!" My friend's brother got up, and hurried out the door, and from that day on he has never stepped foot in any church again.

"Historical Development"

We search in vain in the Bible for any word supporting the doctrine of "auricular confession" (the official title for confession to an authorized priest in a confession box. It is called "auricular" because it is spoken secretly, into the ear of the priest.) It is equally impossible to find any authorization or general practice of it during the first 1,000 years of the Christian era. Not a word is found in the writings of the early church fathers about confessing sins to a priest or to anyone except God alone. Auricular confession is not mentioned once in the writings of Augustine, Origen, Nestorius, Tertullian, Jerome, Chrysostem, or Athanasius all of these and many others apparently lived and died without ever thinking of going to confession. No one other than God was thought to be worthy to hear confessions or to grant forgiveness.

Confession was first introduced into the church on a voluntary basis in the fifth century by the authority of Leo the Great. But it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 under Pope Innocent III that private auricular confession was made compulsory and all Roman Catholic people were required to confess and

to seek absolution from a priest at least once a year. If they did not obey this command, they were pronounced guilty of mortal sin and damned for eternity to hell. ("R.C." p. 199.)

"Can A Priest Forgive Sins?"

The Scriptures teach that "only God can forgive sins" (Mark 2:7). "The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. 9:6). Dr. Zachello tells of his experience as a priest in the confessional before leaving the Roman Church in these words: "Where my doubts were really troubling me was inside the confessional box. People coming to me, kneeling down in front of me, confessing their sins to me. And I, with the sign of the cross, was promising that I had the power to forgive their sins. I, a sinner, a man, was taking God's place. It was God's laws they were breaking, not mine. To God, therefore, they must make confession; and to God alone they must pray for forgiveness."("R.C." p. 203).

In fact, the only word in the Bible about confessing sins to anyone other than God, is found in James: "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed"(5:16). It is obvious that the Lord meant what He says in Revelation, chapter 1, that "He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (vs. 6), and Peter calls the church "a chosen race, a royal priesthood" (I Pet. 2:9). Believe it or not, the only

mention of New Testament believers being priests is used in a context where all true believers are included, not just a select few. That is why James could say that we should confess our sins "to one another".

Catholics love to quote the verse in John 20:23 to prove that priests do have the power to "forgive and retain" sins. "If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them: if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained." The powers of forgiving and retaining sins, were given to the apostles as proclaimers of the Word of God, not as priests. As we have just pointed out, there are no Christian "priests" in New Testament teaching and doctrine. Pastors, yes. Deacons, yes. Apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, yes. Priests, no!

Jesus was telling His followers that by preaching the gospel, they were being given the power to declare that a person's sins were forgiven them by God! And if an individual, or group did not receive them and the forgiveness they offered in the name of Jesus, then they were instructed to "shake the dust off their feet" as a protest against them, and warn those who it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them (Matt. 10:14-15). In other words, if a person rejected the apostles' preaching of the gospel, they had the right to tell that person that his sins were not forgiven, because they

had rejected God's only provision for atonement of sins. "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me" (Luke 10:16). This power to forgive and retain sins, contrary to Rome's teaching, belongs to everyone who preaches the true gospel of salvation.

"Penance"

In the Roman system, penance is one of the seven sacraments. (The seven sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Holy Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction.) The Baltimore Catechism defines penance as "the sacrament by which sins committed after baptism are forgiven through the absolution of the priest" (p. 300). Another catechism published in New York says, "the priest gives penance to help me to make up for the temporal punishment I must suffer for my sins. The penance given to me by the priest does not always make full satisfaction for my sins. I should therefore do other acts of penance . . . and try to gain indulgences." (Indulgences are remissions of so many days or months or years of punishment in purgatory--a subject which we will cover in depth in a future chronicle.) And in Instructions for non-Catholics, we read: "After confession some temporal punishment due to sin generally remains. You should therefore perform other acts of penance also so that you may make up for these punishments, and avoid a long stay in purgatory." (p. 95).

"Penance as a System of Works"

Here indeed is salvation by works. For penance, as the catechism says, involves confession of one's sins to a priest and the doing of good works as the only way by which sins committed after baptism can be forgiven. The Church of Rome thus demands acts of penance before She grants forgiveness, inferring that the sacrifice of Christ was not sufficient to atone fully for sin and that it must be supplemented to some extent by these good works. But what God demands is not acts of penance but repentance, which means turning from sin. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55: 7).

The easy way in which the Church of Rome deals with sin is seen in this doctrine of penance. The penitent receives pardon on comparatively easy terms. He is assigned some task to perform, usually not too hard, sometimes merely the recital of a given number of "Hail Mary's". The result is that he has no qualms about resuming his evil course. It shocked Martin Luther when he read the Greek New Testament edited by Erasmus, that Jesus did not say "do penance" as had been translated by the Roman Church, but "repent".

"Penance versus Repentance"

Penance is a wholly different thing from gospel repentance. Penance is an outward act. Repentance is of the heart. Penance is imposed by a Roman priest. Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit. What God desires in the sinner is not a punishment of oneself for sins, but a change of heart, a real forsaking of sin, shown by a new life of obedience to God's commands.

In short, penance is a counterfeit repentance. It is the work of man on his body; true repentance is the work of God in the soul. The divine Word commands, "Rend your heart and not your garments" (Joel 2:13). Penance is "rending the garments" - an outward form without inward reality.

While Romanism does teach that Christ died for our sins, it also teaches that His sacrifice alone was not sufficient, and that our sufferings must be added to make it effective. In accordance with this, many have tried to earn salvation by fastings, rituals, flagellations and good works of various kinds. But those who attempt such a course always find that it is impossible to do enough to earn salvation.

Dr. C.D. Cole says, "Romanism is a complicated system of salvation by works. It offers salvation on the installment plan, then sees to it that the poor sinner is always behind in his payments, so that when he dies there is a large unpaid balance, and he must continue

payments by sufferings in purgatory, or until the debt is paid by the prayer, alms, and sufferings of his living relatives and friends. The whole system and plan calls for merit and money from the cradle to the grave and even beyond. Surely the wisdom that drew such a plan of salvation is not from above." ("R.C." pp. 257-258.)

"The Biblical Teaching on Good Works"

Good works, of course, are pleasing to God and they have an important and necessary place in the life of the Christian. They naturally follow if one has true faith, and they are performed out of love and gratitude to God for the great salvation that He has bestowed. Good works, in other words, are not the cause and basis of salvation, but rather the fruits and proof of salvation-

"Not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). The born-again Christian produces good works as naturally as the grapevine produces grapes. They are a part of his very nature. He performs them not to get saved, but because he is saved.

"Salvation by Grace"

Grace, just because it is grace, is not given on the basis of proceeding merits. By no stretch of the imagination can a man's good works in this life be

considered a just equivalent for the blessings of eternal life. But all men because of pride, naturally feel that they should earn their salvation, and a system which makes some provision in that regard readily appeals to them. But Paul lays the ax to such reasoning when he says:

"If a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law" (Gal. 3:21). Time and again the Scriptures repeat that salvation is of grace, as if anticipating the difficulty that men would have in accepting the fact that they would not be able to earn it.

The Council of Trent, in its opposition to the reformer's doctrine of justification by faith, and in defense of its doctrine of penance, declared:

"Whoever shall affirm that men are justified solely by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ... let him be accursed" (Council of Trent, section 6.) And the Catholic Almanac says, "Penance is necessary for salvation...and was instituted by Christ for the forgiveness of sins". (pp. 269, 559.)

The modern church teachings completely concur:

"Many things are necessary for salvation. All these things work together faith, baptism, the Eucharist, the doing of good works, and others as well. Redemption is one thing, salvation is quite another. There is nothing lacking on Christ's part; there is much to be done on ours." ("The Apostles Creed" published by

the Knights of Columbus, pp 18-19.) Also, in a booklet published in 1967, under the sub-heading, "We Must Atone Too", it says that "even though the satisfaction of Christ was complete and universal, nevertheless all adult Christians are obliged to imitate their suffering Master and make personal satisfaction for their sins by good works. ("You Shall Rise Again" published by the Knights of Columbus, p. 3.) But the apostle Paul in his masterpiece on justification by faith says, "Having now been justified by His blood we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Rom. 5:9). (See also: Eph. 2:8-10, Rom. 1:17, 3:21, 22, 28, 5:1, 18-19, 11:6, John 3:36, Gal. 2:21, 3:11.)

"And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him as righteousness. Now to the one who works, the reward is not reckoned as grace, but as debt. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness" (Rom.4:3-5).

What a significant coincidence it is that this doctrine of justification by faith is given such prominence in the epistle to the Romans, since Rome later became the seat of the papacy! It seems to be written there as if intended as a strong and permanent protest against the errors of the Roman Church.

"Assurance of Salvation"

The first consequence of the doctrine of penance (as

well as the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences) is that the Roman Catholic, though baptized and confirmed, can never have that assurance of his salvation and that sense of spiritual security which is such a blessing to the true Christian. In proportion as he is spiritually sensitive, the person who holds to a works religion knows that he has not suffered as much as his sins deserve, and that he can never do as much as he should in order to be worthy of salvation.

A dying Roman Catholic, after he has done all that he can do and after the last rites have been given to him, is told that he still must go to purgatory. There he will suffer unknown torture, with no assurance as to how long it will continue, but with the assurance that if his relatives pray for his soul, and pay with sufficient generosity to have candles lit and have special masses said for him, that his sufferings will be shortened somewhat.

Oh what a contrast with all of that, is the death of the true believer who has the assurance that he goes straight to heaven into the immediate presence of Christ! (Phil. 1:23). What a marvelous blessing is the true faith of the Christian, both in life and especially at the time of death!

The Council of Trent even pronounced a curse upon anyone who presumed to say that he had assurance

of salvation, or that the whole punishment for sin is forgiven along with that sin ("R.C." p. 267.) Such assurance is pronounced a delusion and a result of sinful pride. Rome keeps her subjects in constant fear and insecurity. Even at death, after extreme unction has been administered and after thousands of rosary prayers have been said "for the repose of the soul", the priest still cannot give assurance of salvation. The person is never "good enough" but must serve in purgatory prison to be purified of venial sins before he can be admitted to the celestial city. No one can be truly happy or truly at peace. And particularly in spiritual matters, a state of doubt and uncertainty continues for one's whole life, and right into the grave.

But God needs us to be saved, and according to the Bible the Holy Spirit can give us the assurance that we have salvation when we have a true, intimate relationship with the Son of God (I John 5:9-12). But in Romanism, one must work hard for it and must pay dearly for it, and after he has done all that the priest has prescribed, he still cannot know whether he has it or not. And through it all, there stands the anathema of the Council of Trent against all who affirm the certainty of their salvation. Hence, there cannot truly be found anywhere a Roman Catholic, consistent to what his church teaches, who enjoys the true assurance of eternal life.

"Conclusion"

It is obvious by even this brief glimpse into the doctrines of mortal and venial sins, confession, penance, and purgatory, that the Roman Catholic Church has constructed one of the most unbiblical doctrinal systems that has ever been considered "Christian". The fear, anguish, and religious bondage that such a system of "reward and punishment" creates, has tormented millions of lives for centuries, and continues to prey on those who are ignorant of the biblical way of salvation.

To merely call such a system "a cult", would be to throw it into the vast category of religions and quasi-religions that are currently making the rounds of our college campuses and city streets, snatching up many an unsuspecting youth. No, the Roman Church is not a cult. It's an empire!

With its own ruler, its own laws, and its own subjects! The empire has no borders, it encompasses the globe with its eye on every person who does not vow allegiance. It calls the members of other faiths "separated brethren" (The term used by Vatican II to describe the members of Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant churches.) and has as its goal the eventual bringing together of everyone under its flag.

I know that many will not be convinced or moved by this article (or any of the others) to make such a conclusion. They are impressed by what they've

heard about recent stirrings among the Catholics in the "charismatic renewal". Many evangelicals (especially Charismatics) have been thrilled by the reports of Catholics speaking in tongues, dancing in the Spirit, having nights of joy and praise, even attending "charismatic masses".

Mouths that used to speak out boldly against the Church of Rome have been quieted by the times. It no longer is in vogue to speak of the pope as "the antichrist" (Although the following people unhesitatingly did: Martin Luther, John Bunyan, John Huss, John Wycliffe, John Calvin, William Tyndale, John Knox, Thomas Bacon, John Wesley, Samuel Cooper, John Cotton, and Jonathan Edwards.) or the Catholic Church as the "whore of Babylon". Now Protestants unwittingly believe that "our differences are not so great". Ah, that is just what She needs us to think!

I've never completely understood why God led me to write these articles. But it becomes more clear with each day of study, and each page of research. Never has something so black and wicked, gotten away with appearing so holy and mysteriously beautiful . . . for so long!

Part 4. What did "Vatican II" Really Change?

The Roman Catholic Church is very proud of two distinct things: 1) that it has never changed, and 2) that it has changed very much! I realize that number 2

seems to contradict number 1, but anyone who has studied church history even briefly, will be able to grasp what I'm trying to say.

First, Rome is very emphatic about making clear these unalterable facts:

A. That she is the original and only church founded by Jesus Christ upon the earth.

B. That her head, the pope, has the authority handed down from the "first pope," Simon Peter, through "apostolic succession," (1) to sit in the place of Jesus as the undisputed leader of all true Christians on earth.

C. That her traditions and interpretations of scripture are the only basis for forming the rules and guidelines that Christians everywhere should live by.

D. And that her dogmas and doctrines, although they can be clarified, enlarged, or re-stated for the sake of changing times, can never, ever be abolished, contradicted, or altered. They are quite literally, "Canon Law."

On the other hand, modern Roman Catholics are immensely pleased with the reforms and evolution they have seen in their Church, especially since the cataclysmic "Second Vatican Council" (more commonly know as "Vatican II"). They point to how much has been done to open the way for "all Christians everywhere to finally come together!" This, of course, does seem very exciting, especially since Rome has been largely on the defensive since the Reformation. Starting with the Council of Trent in 1546, there has been one papal decree after another, which has completely make it impossible (even forbidden) for Catholics to have any "fellowship" with Protestants.

Ah, but "time heals all wounds" [we] say, and like everything else, the giant chasm between Protestant and catholic now seems with the passing of centuries,

to appear like just a "little misunderstanding." And Vatican II, which included such sweeping reforms as allowing Mass to be said in the common local language, and no longer forbidding Catholics to read a Protestant Bible, or attend a Protestant church service, seemed to make the differences between Rome and the rest of the fragmented Christian world look very petty.

As you probably might guess, I do not believe this to be the case. In fact, in my research and studies I have only found the opposite to be true, Yes indeed, the Catholic Church is changing! It has probably never changed so much in all its history as during the past generation, but it has not changed one, single, solitary doctrine! Each and every point of dogma that has alarmed evangelical theologians for the past 400 years remains the same, exactly as written, and in full force!

But because of all the changed garments, all the reformed liturgies and ceremonies, and the resulting freedom of worship, Catholics everywhere (as well as many Protestants) have mistakenly believed that something substantial has really changed! But this is not a surprise, it has happened before many times in history. When you change the key, the instruments, or the rhythm of a song, almost everyone will believe you have a new song. Only those who listen carefully to the lyrics, or who know their music well, will realize that yes, the style is different, but the song is the same!

The whole thing seems so sad to me, when I realize how very few there are among Catholics (and Protestants) who really know what Roman Catholicism teaches. It is truly shocking! And what's even more alarming, is the potential for the devil to pull the wool over people's eyes because of their ignorance.

I have received many letters from Catholics in response to the first three Chronicles, which have basically said this: "The Catholic Church has really changed! why not use the current beliefs and teachings that are a result of Vatican II?" Believe me, in each of my articles, I was doing just that! I would be a fool to be refuting doctrines and teaching that are no longer being used. But because Catholic worship is based so much on ritual, ceremony, and symbolic

outward forms, the average Catholic believes with all his heart that when he sees these surface things altered, that his church has really changed! You have only to look at the documents of Vatican II to see that this is not the case.

The Need for Vatican II

In the early 1960's, the Vatican knew that there was a need to give the Church a face-lift. Many of its policies seemed out of place, and most of its forms of worship were stiff and outdated. There was a feeling among the bishops that the Church needed to evolve with the times, and there was also a growing to re-unite with Rome, that she was going to have to give herself a more pleasant and appealing appearance. There was also criticism from her own ranks that her doctrines needed to be clarified and "re- stated" in a more simple and less dogmatic tone than previous councils had done.

Thus the Second Vatican Council was called by Pope John XXIII in 1962, and continued under Pope Paul VI until 1965 when it issued "The Documents of Vatican II," each on different aspects of church teaching and doctrine. The spirit and attitude of these documents were remarkably different from any the Roman Church had ever produced. They were full of scriptural references, and did not include any blatant "curses" on those who did not agree (as previous councils had done). They were revolutionary in freeing individual parish priests to conduct Masses in the way they best could reach the local culture and community. This, as well as changes in church administration and religious freedom were the main results of the Council.

In the following years, there were other changes that proceeded out of Rome as a result of the new attitudes which were born from Vatican II. These included the removal of the strict requirement to refrain from eating meat on Fridays (and also the command to fast during Lent). Although these practices were still encouraged, they were now optional instead of mandatory. The whole Church seemed to be loosening up. And ecumenical leaders the world over were beginning to see the light at the end of the church-unity tunnel.

But in the midst of all this, a few ardent Christians still stubbornly pointed out that although the procedure and the language of the Mass might have changed, the meaning of it still remained very much the same. And though the outward forms and words used by Rome had been altered much, the things she taught and believed had only been confirmed and repeated in the soft and soothing tone of the Vatican II documents.

The Charismatic Movement

And then came the "charismatic renewal" seemingly out of nowhere! With the Pope's blessing, Catholics were taking part in charismatic Masses, speaking in tongues, prophesying, singing and shouting side by side with Evangelical Protestants! Everyone was so excited - they thought, "Now we've got the devil licked! Why, doctrine wasn't important anymore, that was for seminary students and old, stuffy theologians!" but as the excitement started to quiet down a little, the Protestants noticed that a few of their Catholic brothers and sisters were still praying to Mary, and were even offering prayers for their dead relatives in the prayer meetings.

It soon became apparent that unity was not going to be as easy as it had seemed at first. Protestants began to make inquiries, and they started bothering their Catholic friends too much with questions like, "Do you think the Pope is saved?" As you can see, the whole future of the ecumenical movement hinges on this all-important question: "Can a Roman Catholic be considered a genuine believer (according to the Bible), and still believe the things the Roman Church teaches?"

The Things That Vatican II Did Not Change

To help answer that question, we have prepared a list of teachings and practices that have been adopted and perpetuated by the Roman Catholic Church over the last 1600 years. It is important to note that not one of these were altered at all by the Second Vatican Council.

A Scholar Looks at Vatican II

Dr. Loraine Boettner, noted Evangelical authority on Roman Catholic doctrine, takes an in-depth look at the documents of Vatican II in the preface to the fifth edition of his book *Roman Catholicism*. Dr. Boettner writes:

"The Second Vatican Council, which closed late in 1965, made changes in the liturgy, administrative practices, and in the matter of religious freedom. It repeated the claim that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true church, although it did recognize that other churches contain some elements of truth. "But Pope John XXIII, who called the first session, and Pope Paul VI, who presided over the later sessions (as well as several prominent cardinal and theologians), took care to emphasize that no changes would be made in the doctrinal structure of the Church. However, Pope Paul did promulgate [declare] one new doctrine, which asserts that 'Mary is the Mother of the Church.' The primary purpose of the Council was to update the liturgy and administrative practices and so to make the Church more efficient and more acceptable to the 20th century world.

"The introduction of the 'New Mass,' for instance, brought about a change in language - Latin is no longer required, except in the prayer of consecration. But as Protestants, it is not important to us whether the Mass is said in Latin or English or Swahili - it is not the language of the Mass that we object to, it is its content and meaning. (See Chronicle II, 'The Sacrifice of the Mass').

"On previous occasions, Rome has changed her tactics when old methods became ineffective, but she has never changed her nature. In any religious organization, doctrine is the most basic and important part of its structure, since what people believe determines what they do. An official document, 'The Constitution on the Church' prepared by the Council and approved by the Pope, reaffirms basic Catholic doctrine precisely as it stood before the Council met. The doctrine of papal infallibility is restated. We are told that when 'by a definitive act he proclaims a doctrine of faith and morals...his definitions, of themselves, and not by the consent of the Church, are justly called, irreformable' (Article 25).

The pope has lost none of his powers. He remains the absolute ruler in the Roman Church. But if papal decrees past and present are 'irreformable', what hope is there for real reform in the Church of Rome?

Although many of these beliefs were practiced earlier than the dates given, they did not become binding on all Catholics until they were officially adopted by church councils and proclaimed by the Pope as dogmas of faith. All dates are approximate.

1. Presbyter (or elders) were first called priests by Lucian...2nd century.
2. Prayers for the dead...A.D. 300.
3. The VENERATION of angels and dead saints and the use of images...375.
4. The Mass as a daily celebration was adopted...394.
5. The beginning of the exaltation of Mary, and the first use of the term "Mother of God" by the Council of Ephesus...431.
6. Priests began to dress different from the laity and to wear special clothes...500.
7. Extreme Unction...526.
8. The doctrine of purgatory was first established by Gregory the Great...593.
9. Prayers began to be offered to Mary, dead saints, and angels...600.
10. The first man was proclaimed "Pope" (Boniface III)...610.
11. Veneration of the cross, images, and relics authorized...788.
12. Holy water, mixed with a pinch of salt and blessed by a priest was authorized in...850.
13. Veneration of Saint Joseph...890.
14. College of cardinals begun...927.
15. Canonization of dead saints, first by Pope John XV...995.
16. The Mass developed gradually as a sacrifice, attendance was made obligatory in...11th century.
17. The celibacy of the priesthood was decreed by Pope Hildebrand, Boniface VII...1079.
18. The rosary, or prayer beads copied from Hindus and Mohammadans) was

introduced by Peter the Hermit...1090.

19. The Inquisition (2) of "Heretics" was instituted by the Council of Verona...1184, and was legalized and promoted by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

20. The sale of Indulgences...1190.

21. The seven sacraments defined by Peter Lombard...12th century.

22. The dogma of transubstantiation was decreed by Pope Innocent III...1215.

23. Confession of sins to the priest at least once a year was instituted by Pope Innocent III in the Lateran Council...1215.

24. The adoration of the wafer (host) decreed by Pope Honorius III...1220.

25. The scapular invented by Simon Stock of England...1251.

26. The doctrine of purgatory proclaimed a dogma by the Council of Florence...1439.

27. Tradition is declared of equal authority with the Bible by the Council Trent...1546.

28. The Apocryphal Books were added to the Bible by the Council of Trent...1545.

29. The Immaculate Conception of Mary was proclaimed by Pope Pius IX in 1854.

30. Pope Pius IX condemns all scientific discoveries not approved by the Roman Church...1864.

31. Infallibility of the pope in matters of faith and morals proclaimed by the First Vatican Council...1870.

32. Pius XI condemned the public schools...1930.

33. Pius XI reaffirmed the doctrine that Mary is "The Mother of God"...1931.

34. The dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary was proclaimed by Pope Pius XII...1950.

35. Mary proclaimed the Mother of the Church by Pope Paul VI...1965.

"The document on the Church repeats in substance the teaching of the Council of Trent that 'priests and bishops are the representatives of God on earth...justly,

therefore, they are called not only angels, but gods, holding as they do the place of authority of God on earth.' (Catechism of Trent).

"In fact, no more sweeping claims were made by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), nor by the First Vatican Council (1870), than are made in these documents from Vatican II. Despite all the claims to the contrary, the Council has firmly maintained the doctrine of the primacy of Peter (3) and of papal succession. In his book, *Ecclesiam Suam*, Pope Paul expressed his distress because of what some of the 'separated brethren' (4) say about the pope as the stumbling block in the way of church unity. He said, 'Do not some of them say that if it were not for the primacy of the pope, the reunion of the separated churches with Catholic Church would be easy? We beg the separated brethren to consider the inconsistency of this position, not only in that, without the pope, the Catholic Church would no longer be Catholic, but also because without the supreme decisive pastoral office of Peter, the unity of the Church of Christ would utterly collapse.

"We must say that at this point we agree with the Pope, at least to this extent, that if the Roman Catholic Church were reformed according to scripture, it would have to be abandoned. But the gross errors concerning salvation still remain. Moreover, the Council did nothing toward removing the more than 100 anathemas or curses pronounced by the Council of Trent on the Protestant churches and beliefs. If there is to be any true unity, surely this would seem the logical place to start."

Conclusion

We could not find a more fitting conclusion than Dr. Boettner's:

"The 'Constitution on the Church' makes it abundantly clear that Rome has no intention of revising any of her basic doctrine, but only of updating her methods and techniques for more efficient administration and to present a more attractive appearance. This is designed to make it easier for the Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant churches to return to her fold. There is no indication that

she has any intentions of entering into genuine give-and-take church unity negotiations. Her purpose is not union, but ABSORPTION. Church union with Rome is strictly a one-way street. The age-old danger that Protestantism has faced from the Roman Church has not diminished; in fact, it may well have increased. For through this less-offensive posture and this superficial ecumenicism, Rome is much better situated to carry out her program of eliminating opposition and moving into a position of world dominance. AN INFALLIBLE CHURCH SIMPLY CANNOT REPENT."

Footnotes

- 1) The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Jesus Christ ordained the 12 apostles to the priesthood at the Last Supper, and to their successors, the Roman priesthood, Jesus promised and guaranteed His continual presence in their teaching and governing until the end of time.
- 2) Inquisition - the act of inquiring into a matter; an investigation - American Heritage Dictionary. Lucius III decreed that bishops should take action against heretics. A characteristic of this decree was that a suspect, once convicted of being a heretic, was to be handed over to the secular arm for punishment. Before the Inquisition ran its course, historians estimate that 5 to 15 million people lost their lives through torture and and execution (From: A History of Christianity in the World by Clyde L. Manschreck).
- 3) The doctrine that Christ has given Peter the key role of lawful authority... that Peter would be His chief ambassador, His authentic vicar (pope) and this power continues to be extended to Peter's successors through the ages - the popes.
- 4) The term used by Vatican II to describe the members of other non- Catholic Christian faiths.