

Dear Friend

Roman Catholics are required to believe that there is an historical continuity between the Church founded by Christ and the Roman Catholic Church. This was officially declared in section 16 of the document 'Dominus Iesus' in the year 2000. Most Roman Catholics presume that this is indeed an historical fact. Many bible believers have not really analyzed the question. It is therefore of great importance to study the authentic early church. This we have done in the article below. Kindly forward this article to others, and place it your Webpage if possible

We rejoice in "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints",  
Richard Bennett

## **Identifying the Authentic Early Church**

By Richard Bennett

The early Church understood apostolic doctrine as the written Word of the Apostles as it was contained in the Scriptures. "From the very beginning of the post-apostolic age with the writings of what are known as the Apostolic Fathers (Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement, the Didache, and Barnabas) there was an exclusive appeal to the Scriptures for the positive teaching of doctrine and for its defense against heresy. The writings of the Apostolic Fathers literally breathe with the spirit of the Old and New Testaments. In the writings of the apologists such as Justin Martyr and Athenagoras the same thing is found. There is no appeal in any of these writings to the authority of a verbal or extra-biblical tradition as a separate and independent body of revelation. It is with the writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian in the mid to late second century that the concept of an apostolic tradition, which is handed down in the Church in oral form, is first encountered. The word "tradition" simply means teaching. Irenaeus and Tertullian state emphatically that all the teachings of the bishops that were given orally were rooted in Scripture and could be proven from the written Scriptures. Both men give the actual doctrinal content of the apostolic tradition that was orally preached in the churches, and it can be seen clearly that all their doctrine was derived from Scripture. There was no doctrine in what they refer to as apostolic tradition that is not found in Scripture. In other words, the apostolic tradition defined by Irenaeus and Tertullian is simply the teaching of Scripture. It was Irenaeus who stated that while the Apostles at first preached orally, their teaching was later committed to writing, and the Scriptures had since that day become the pillar and ground of the Church's faith."<sup>1</sup>

From the earliest times a substantial part of the New Testament was available to the believers. The four Gospels were known and read in the churches. The letters of the Apostles Paul and Peter were circulated and used even while the Apostles lived. These New Testament books did not become authoritative because they were being formally accepted as Scripture by any church or group of churches; rather the believers received them as inspired because under the witness of the indwelling Holy Spirit, they recognized the very Word of God. The life of Christ Jesus, in His role as the final and full revelation of God, culminated in the New Testament canon. It expressed the final prophetic Word of grace and truth given in Him. The early

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<sup>1</sup> William Webster, "Sola Scriptura and the Early Church"

[http://www.bereanbeacon.org/articles/sola\\_scriptura\\_early\\_church.htm](http://www.bereanbeacon.org/articles/sola_scriptura_early_church.htm)

believers accepted the Written Word of the New Testament, as the words of Christ Jesus Himself—unchangeable, final, finished and authoritative.

God's people in the first three centuries after Christ universally accepted what we now know as the New Testament. They "*received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.*"<sup>2</sup> There were indeed controversies over individual books, but this confirmed rather than impeded the certainty that they had God's final Written Word "*which was once delivered unto the saints.*"<sup>3</sup> The Lord's people universally knew the contents of the canon of the New Testament well before the local Council of Hippo formally accepted it in 393A.D, and before the provincial Council of Carthage in 397A.D.

### **Extensive growth and severe Persecution**

The spread of the Christian faith during the first three centuries was extensive and rapid. In the providence of God, the main reasons for this were the fidelity and zeal of the preachers of the Gospel, the heroic deaths of the martyrs, and the translation of the Scriptures into the languages of the Roman world. Under Emperor Septimius Severus (193-211) Christians suffered appallingly. The most severe persecution was under the Emperor Diocletian and his co-regent, Galerius, during the years 303-311. The historian Philip Schaff states that, "all copies of the Bible were to be burned; all Christians were to be deprived of public office and civil rights; and last, all, without exception, were to sacrifice to the gods upon pain of death."<sup>4</sup> Yet far from exterminating the Christians and the Gospel, the persecution purified those who preached and increased their ability to give the Gospel message.

### **Early church in northern Italy and southern France**

The Vaudois withdrew from the areas in and around Rome to the valleys of the Cottian Alps during the persecutions of the early church.<sup>5</sup> These Bible believers always held to the Scripture as their only authority, which was evident in their faith and practice for centuries, from the time of their withdrawal to the valleys of the Cottian Alps.

The testimony of their lives over the centuries shows that the Vaudois and others had chosen to follow the authority of the Bible as their rule of life. By the early tenth century the Paulicians, who later became known as the Albigenses, have a similar history of always having had the orthodox Scripture, adhering to it, and through it making many converts to true biblical faith.

It is to be regretted that most of the information concerning the Paulicians comes through their enemies. The entire people were called Paulicians as following the apostle Paul. It was in the country of the Albigenses, in the Southern provinces of France, that the Paulicians were most deeply implanted. The faith of the Paulicians lived on in Languedoc and along the Rhône as the Christianity of the Cathars, and, perhaps, also among the Waldenses. The popes persecuted them and all literary and other traces of them, as far as possible, were destroyed. "The visible

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:13

<sup>3</sup> Jude 3

<sup>4</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1, Second Period, p. 34

<sup>5</sup> George Stanley Faber, *The History of the Ancient Vallenses and Albigenses* (Fleet Street, London: R. B. Seeley & W. Burnside, 1838) Re-published by Church History Research & Archives, P O Box 38, Dayton, OH 45449

assemblies of the Paulicians, of Albigeois, were extirpated by fire and sword; and the bleeding remnant escaped by flight, concealment, or Catholic conformity. In the state, in the church, and even in the cloister, a latent succession was preserved of the disciples of St. Paul; who protested against the tyranny of Rome, and embraced the Bible as the rule of faith, and purified their creed from all the visions of the Gnostic theology".<sup>6</sup>

The Paulicians were accused of being Manichaeans, and there has been prejudice against them because of this. It is now clearly known that the Paulicians were not Manichaeans.<sup>7</sup> Turning to the doctrines and practices of the Paulicians we find that they made constant use of the Old and New Testaments. They had no orders in the clergy as distinguished from laymen by their modes of living, their dress, or other things; they had no councils or similar institutions. Their teachers were of equal rank. They strove diligently for the simplicity of the apostolic life. They opposed all image worship, which was practiced in the Roman Catholic Church. They considered the 'miraculous relics' as a heap of bones and ashes, destitute of life and of virtue. They held to the orthodox view of the Trinity; and to the human nature and substantial sufferings of the Son of God.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Vaudois**

The Vaudois as we saw earlier were already extant in the early post apostolic times. They are sometimes called Waldenses, after the name of one of their famous leaders, Peter Waldo of Lyon also known as Peter Valdès. It was the received opinion among the Waldenses that they were of ancient origin and truly apostolic. "They call themselves," says David of Augsburg, "successors of the apostles, and say that they are in possession of the apostolic authority, and of the keys to bind and unbind".<sup>9</sup> Theodore Beza, the Reformer of the sixteenth century, voices the sentiment of his times, when he said, "As for the Waldenses, I may be permitted to call them the very seed of the primitive and purer Christian church, since, they are those that have been upheld, as is abundantly manifest, by the wonderful providence of God, so that neither those endless storms and tempests by which the whole Christian world has been shaken for so many succeeding ages, and the Western part so miserably oppressed by the Bishop of Rome, falsely so called; nor those horrible persecutions which have been expressly raised against them, were able so far to prevail as to make them bend, or yield a voluntary subjection to the Roman tyranny and idolatry".<sup>10</sup>

The first distinguishing principle of the Waldenses bore on daily conduct, and was summed up in the words of the apostle: "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" The second distinguishing principle was the authority and popular use of the Holy Scriptures. Here again the Waldenses anticipated the Reformation. The Bible was a living book, and there were those among them who could quote the entire book from memory.

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<sup>6</sup> Gibbon, Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire, V. p. 398

<sup>7</sup> Modern Armenian scholars do not hesitate to correct this error (Ter Mkittsehai, Die Paulikianer im Byzantinischen in Armenien, Leipzig, 1893).

<sup>8</sup> A History of the Baptists Vol 1. Chapter 4 John T. Christian A.M D.D LI.D.  
[http://www.pbministries.org/History/John%20T.%20Christian/vol1/history\\_04.htm](http://www.pbministries.org/History/John%20T.%20Christian/vol1/history_04.htm)

<sup>9</sup> Preger, Der Tractat des David von Augsburg über die Waldensier. München, 1876

<sup>10</sup> Moreland, History of the Evangelical Churches, 7

The third principle was the importance of preaching and the right of believing men to exercise that function. Peter Waldo and his associates were preachers. To these fundamental principles the Waldenses, on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount, added the rejection of oaths, the condemnation of purgatory and prayers for the dead. There are only two ways after death, the Waldenses declared, the way to heaven and the way to hell.<sup>11</sup>

The Waldensian movement touched many people, through many centuries and attracted converts from many sources. Many Roman Catholics were won over and some of them doubtless brought some error with them.

### **Early Asian Churches**

The expansion of Christianity in Asia is a very fascinating story. About this Moffett writes, "Before the end of the first century the Christian faith broke out across the borders of Rome into 'Asian' Asia. Its roots may have been as far away as India or as near as Edessa ...just across the Euphrates. From Edessa...the faith spread to another small kingdom three hundred miles further east across the Tigris River...near ancient Nineveh. By the end of the second century, missionary expansion had carried the church as Far East as Bactria, what is now northern Afghanistan and mass conversions of Huns and Turks in Central Asia were reported from the fifth century onward. By the end of the seventh century..."<sup>12</sup>

### **Early church Ireland and Europe**

The work the Gospel preacher Patrick and his associates in Ireland was extremely difficult. He came up against the old pagan religion of the Druids. The people believed in the Druids as pagan priests who mediated for them in the things of the spirit. He also wrote about anxious journeys, difficulties, and disappointments. He combated the powers of darkness in the priesthood of the Druids. He relied on Christ Jesus and the glorious Holy Spirit given to convict people of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He understood grace to be entirely from God. Over the course of 60 years, Patrick went the length and breadth of Ireland preaching the Gospel and, like Timothy and Titus before him; he ordained elders and established churches. It is reckoned that at the end of his days there were 365 churches across the island. These were established, as were the churches in Biblical times, with the people served by a pastor or elder. The authority of the pastor was one of service, rather than lording it over the people. It was like that which was established in the pages of Scripture. Likewise, the monasteries set up by Patrick, were totally unlike the monasteries that were established under the Church of Rome. These monasteries were quite like those of the Vaudois and other early Christian churches of northern Italy and southern France, whereby men came aside for some years to be trained in the Scriptures and to learn how to evangelize and to bring the Gospel to others. Later in their lives these men married and had families. These men were not forsaking the world for some retreat of inner holiness; rather, they were men who saw light and life in Christ Jesus and wished to evangelize others with the true Gospel. Because of these monasteries and the churches that Patrick founded in Ireland, Ireland became known as the "Isle of Saints and Scholars".

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<sup>11</sup> Vid Schaff, History of the Christian Church. V. Pt 1.502-504

<sup>12</sup> Moffett xiv-xv. As cited on East of the Euphrates: Early Christianity in Asia, by T.V. Philip Chapter 2 <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1553&C=1361>

There were more than 600 years of fruitfulness in the clarity of the Gospel message cherished by Patrick, and those who worked with him were to live on for many years after him. There were many famous missionaries like Patrick such as Columba and his companions who set out for Scotland in 563. Then there was Columbanus with his companions that went to evangelize France and Germany in 612. Kilian and the brothers that accompanied him went as missionaries to Franconia and Wurzburg in 680. Forannan and twelve brothers with him set out to bring the Gospel to the Belgian frontier in 970.<sup>13</sup>

Irish missionaries carried the Gospel with the same truthfulness as Patrick's to Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy and beyond.

### **Early church in the city of Rome**

The Papal Church is a magnificently rich, splendidly housed political and ecclesiastical power headquartered in Rome. It stands in stark contrast to what started there in the first century with some pastors ministering to small congregations. The differences are graphic. The early home churches under their pastors looked to the authority of the Word as received in the gospel accounts of the life of the Lord and the writings of the Apostles, together with the Old Testament. These pastors and churches had a true and living faith in God's grace through the Gospel. From the letter of Paul to the Romans one sees that the Gospel was faithfully treasured in those early Roman congregations. At the beginning of his letter, the Apostle commends the believers at Rome for their faith, "*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son....*"<sup>14</sup> Such approvals are infrequent with the Apostle Paul. The faith of the churches of Rome continued to be well known and faithfully lived for two hundred fifty years more under very adverse situations, including extreme persecutions, the most famous of which took place under Emperor Nero in the 64 A.D. Totally unimaginable for these early believers in Rome would be the present concept of "the most holy Roman Pontiff." Unthinkable likewise would be the belief that rituals could confer the grace of the Holy Spirit and that Mary, the mother of the Lord, could be addressed in prayer as "the All Holy One".<sup>15</sup> In the fellowship of believers, a top heavy hierarchical system, from layperson to priest, from priest to bishop, from bishop to cardinal and cardinal to Pope would have been totally abhorrent, as from the world and not from Christ who said, "*One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.*"<sup>16</sup>

The persecution of Christians of which we mentioned earlier ended in 313 A.D. In that year the emperors Constantine in the West and Licinius in the East proclaimed the Edict of Milan. This decree established the policy of religious freedom for both paganism and Christianity. Four vice-prefects governed the Roman Empire under Constantine. Accordingly, under his authority the Christian world was to be governed from four great cities, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Rome. Over each city there was set a Patriarch, who governed all the

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<sup>13</sup> For a more complete list, see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 4, Ch. 2, "Conversion of Northern and Western Barbarians", Sect. 15, "The Irish Church after St. Patrick. The Missionary Period".

<sup>14</sup> Romans 1:8-9

<sup>15</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), Para. 2677, "By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the 'Mother of Mercy,' the All Holy One."

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 23:8.

elders of his domain. (This was later to be called a diocese.) The mind of and purpose of Constantine was that the Christian churches were to be organized in a fashion similar to the government of the Empire.

The respect enjoyed by the various Christian elders was usually in proportion to the status of the city in which they resided. Since Rome was the most powerful and prestigious city in the world at the time, it stood to unbiblical reason that the most prominent and influential bishop should be the Bishop of Rome. Gradually the honor and respect given to the Bishop of Rome grew, and these bishops in turn desired this adulation from bishops of other cities. The church was in such decline that with the passing of third and fourth centuries the bishops of Rome began to demand recognition for the exalted position they now considered their possession.

### **Gradual rise of Papal Rome**

In the fourth and fifth centuries as the true Gospel was watered down, its place was taken by ritualism and ceremony. The true worship of God and the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit gave way to formal rites and idolatry. Pagan practices were also introduced, whitewashed with an external form of Christianity. From the beginning, the Gospel produced an internal unity among the believers, but with the substitution of ritualism for the Gospel came the insistence on an external, visible unity for the church. The clergy-laity division of the church became the accepted base. This further devolved into a hierarchy of the ruling clergy. By the end of the fifth century, a sacrificing priesthood in which the priest presumed to mediate between God and men had replaced the early ministers of the Gospel who had taught the Scripture. The Church was no more the fellowship of believers under Christ Jesus, united by the Gospel, true worship, and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but rather an institution dominated by a hierarchy of bishops and elders.<sup>17</sup>

Simultaneously, from early to mid-fifth century, the city of Rome was beset first by Alaric the Goth, who captured it in 410 but did not stay to rule; Attila the Hun, who in 452 was persuaded by Leo, the then Bishop of Rome (440-461), to stop his advance and leave Italy altogether; and finally Genseric, leader of the Vandals, who captured the city, but was persuaded by Leo to spare the lives of Romans.<sup>18</sup> Leo's fame as Rome's protector grew enormously as a result.

The position of Imperial Roman emperor by now had become clearly vacant. A vacuum had been established because the Imperial leadership had left Rome and none of the barbaric leaders had tried to set himself up in that position. Leo, as the Bishop of Rome, saw the opportunity that lay in front of him,

“Leo began to feel that the time had come to materialize the claims of Augustine regarding the temporal millennial kingdom of Christ, and with his avowed vested powers of loosing and binding openly to declare his right to the vacant throne as the fitting seat of Christ's universal kingdom. In this way the Roman church pushed its way into the place of the

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<sup>17</sup> J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, originally published in 1878 (Kilkeel, N. Ireland: Mourne Missionary Trust, 1985) Vol. I, Book I, pp. 3-14. See also D'Aubigne, Book I, pp.1-34.

<sup>18</sup> LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1950) Vol. I, p. 498.

Western empire, of which it is ‘the actual continuation.’ Thus the empire did not perish; it only changed its form. The pope became Caesar’s successor. This was a long stride forward.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Bishop of Rome becomes the Pope**

The removal of the seat of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople in 330 A.D. enhanced marvelously the Bishop of Rome’s power. The ecclesiastical contest which had been going on for some time between Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Rome as to which was the greatest was now for most part confined to the dioceses of Rome and the new contender, Constantinople.

The barbarian invasions of the Western Roman Empire helped immeasurably to build the whole structure of papal Rome. The ten barbarian kingdoms that were a serious threat were the Alamanni, Franks, Visigoths, Burgundians, Suevi, Anglo-Saxons, Lombards, Heruli, Vandals, and the Ostrogoths.<sup>20</sup> The Emperor of Rome now lived in Constantinople; yet his armies uprooted and destroyed the Vandals and the Heruli, while simultaneously contending with the Ostrogoths, who continued their siege of Rome.

Clovis, King of the Franks, was the first of the barbarian princes to accept the faith proposed by the Church of Rome. In fulfillment of a vow that he had made on the battlefield when he defeated the Allemanni, Clovis was baptized in 496 A. D. in the Cathedral of Rheims. The Bishop of Rome gave him the title of “the eldest son of the Church.” In the sixth century, the Burgundians of Southern Gaul, the Visigoths of Spain, the Suevi of Portugal, and the Anglo-Saxons of Britain all followed suit in joining themselves to the religion of the Bishop of Rome. These barbaric kings and their peoples accepted easily the faith of Rome, which because it lacked the Gospel, was not very different in form and substance from their own pagan worship. All of these conversions advanced the power of the Roman Bishop. Then, too, these barbaric nations more easily accepted the religion of Rome because this city had traditionally been the seat of authority of the Caesars as masters of the world. The bishops of Rome now played their role as rightful heirs to the Caesars. The city that had been the seat of power for the Empire became the place for the Bishop to exercise his authority. More and more nations accepted his position.

Emperor Justinian I (527-565) was the one, more than anyone else, to establish the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome. He did it in a formal and legal manner by bringing purely ecclesiastical edicts and regulations under the control of civil law.

Justinian’s decree did not create the office of the Pope but rather set the legal foundation for advancement in ruling power by the bishops of Rome. To allay the demise of the Imperial Empire, ecclesiastical unity was to be imposed by coercion if necessary, not the first time nor yet the last that religion would be used to buttress political positions. As proclaimed head of the Empire’s church, the job fell to the Bishop of Rome. The title of “Pope” began to fit the one who sat as “Bishop of Rome”, who now was free to use the civil sword of coercion given him by Justinian’s decree. Formerly, ecclesiastical unity came by the moral persuasion of the Gospel

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> The first seven are now known as Germany, France, Spain, Switzerland, Portugal, England, and Italy respectively.

and the Scripture alone to save individuals who then would be salt and light to their civil societies. But such unbiblical ideas and methods as the Bishops of Rome had so willingly sought after and received could hardly produce something other than worldly corruption. It is no surprise then that soon the Bishop of Rome desired to reign like a king with worldly pomp and worldly power. The very thing that the Lord had warned against was now transpiring. *“And he said unto them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them...but ye shall not be so....”*<sup>21</sup> An account of Vatican’s use of religious and civil power is given on our Internet article called “An Overview of Papal History”.

### **A summary of the foundations of the Early Church**

The world was floundering on its foundations when the Gospel of Christ was first preached. The national religions had not changed the heart and lives of mankind. People were destitute of spirit and of life. Fallacies and superstitions abounded to no avail. The vast Roman Empire brought in universality and some political unity, but no light and hope. Then the Christ Jesus came among men to save that which was lost and to give everlasting life. This is the greatest event the history of the world. The Old Testament Scriptures predicted it, Gospel of the New Testament proclaimed it.

The Lord’s followers starting at Jerusalem, proclaimed Him as the author of everlasting life. From the midst of a people who despised all nations, came forth a mercy that invited and embraced all men. Greeks and Romans and men and women from across the known world believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and came into new life in Him to the glory of His Name.

Peoples of Africa, Egypt, Gaul, Germany, Ireland Britain, and India had their eyes open to the Gospel by the conviction of the Holy Spirit by means of the Lord’s word. The Gospel proclaimed that salvation comes from Him alone by his grace as Lord. *“God hath given to us eternal life.”*

The Church began as a community of brothers and sisters and the Lord guided by a few of the brethren. The Gospels of the Lord Jesus Christ and the written letters of the Apostles settled the great questions of doctrine.

There was nothing arrogant or high and mighty as the apostles addressed the churches. The unity in the Lord is seen when in the many expressions that they used for example and the Acts of the Apostles it was written, *“The apostles and elders and brethren send greetings unto the brethren.”* We rejoice before the Lord God that the authentic Church had the true Gospel of God’s grace. Right across Europe and even Asia churches were established. Faith, consistent with the Scriptures is the means by which the believer enters into the salvation purchased the faithfulness and death of Christ Jesus. Therefore we rejoice that the Lord God is almighty and that there is good news for all who are *“dead in trespasses and sins”*. In the light of His Word we know, *“the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth....”*<sup>22</sup> By nature we are all children of wrath, and by practice we are rebels against the Lord God and His Word. The perfect and just law of God condemned us all and the Lord God is not responsible to rescue any of us from His just wrath. Despite our sin nature and personal sin, the Lord God has given His beloved Son for all true believers. God is the All Holy One. His holiness is the distinguishing factor in all His essential characteristics. This is the reason why we

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<sup>21</sup> Luke 22:25-26

<sup>22</sup> Romans 1:16

need to be in right standing before the one and only All Holy God on the terms He prescribes. Turn to God in faith alone for the salvation that He alone gives, by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, based on Christ's death and resurrection, and believe on Him alone, *"to the praise of the glory of his grace."* The understanding of the Gospel causes us to proclaim in loving gratitude, *"not unto us, o Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."*

If in face of all of this you are intent on trusting in church and its traditions you are similar to the Pharisees in the Lord's own time. The simple truth is just as the Lord spoke to these same Pharisees *"I said therefore unto you that you shall die in your sins if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins."*<sup>23</sup> If you are intent in holding to this 'faith' in your church in practice you are denying His Person. Scripture is crystal clear, *"for by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works as anyone should boast."*<sup>24</sup> It is the riches of His grace to show His graciousness, that He alone saves is the whole meaning of divine grace. The Father's love is personal; He calls you by name and provides for you. He, the mighty God, the Father, *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> John 8:24

<sup>24</sup> Ephesians: 8-9

<sup>25</sup> II Corinthians 6:17-18