

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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John Paul II: Blessed in the Sight of God? by Richard Bennett

The beatification of John Paul II by Benedict XVI on May 1, 2011, would be “an historic event which has no precedent,” declared the director of the Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*.¹ The “Decree for John Paul II’s Beatification” stated,

The proclamation of a Saint or of a Blessed by the Church is the fruit of putting together various aspects regarding a specific Person.... [T]he *sine qua non* condition is the holiness of the person’s life, verified during the precise and formal canonical proceedings.² The communiqué announcing the beatification referred to “the great fame of sanctity which Pope John Paul II enjoyed during his life, in his death and after his death.”³

Indeed, there continued to be great, general admiration for the life and achievements of John Paul II. In terms of worldly acclaim, it has been hard to find an equal to him in recent history. The Roman Catholic world would soon officially proclaim him blessed, and many others would agree. But would they be right? Is John Paul II blessed in the sight of God? Is the alleged sanctity or holiness, which is claimed for John Paul II, in line with what the Scripture teaches?

Objective Measure for John Paul II’s Sanctity

The Lord underscored Scriptural truth as the foundation of sanctity. He declared, “*If a man love me, he will keep my words*” (John 14:23). Consequently, it is the responsibility of the one who claims to be Christ’s disciple to keep His Word. In fact, the

authentic mark of sanctity is total esteem for His Word. As the Lord describes it, “*to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word*” (Isaiah 66:2).

Did John Paul II have an absolute respect for Scripture? No, it was the exact opposite. In his role as Pope, he published the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the first universal catechism of the Roman Catholic Church in several centuries. In it he decreed the following,

As a result the [Roman Catholic] Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, “does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.”⁴

This teaching of John Paul II equates Scripture with tradition. Christ Jesus continually rebuked the Pharisees because they likewise placed their tradition on a par with Scripture. Christ condemned them because they were attempting to corrupt the very basis of truth by equating their traditions with the Scripture.⁵ John Paul II has committed the same error; thus, he falls under the same condemnation. The Lord Jesus Christ clearly showed that God’s written word alone is the sole basis of truth. He proclaimed, “*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*” (John 17:17). This is why He

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Wash. DC: United States Catholic Conf., Inc., 1994, 1997) Para 82.

⁵ *Mark 7:13*, “...making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such things do ye.”

¹ <http://www.zenit.org/article-31523?l=english> 1/24/11.

² <http://www.zenit.org/article-31460?l=english> 2/4/2011.

³ <http://www.zenit.org/article-31450?l=english> 1/18/2011.

commands nothing to be added to it, nor anything subtracted from it. Consequently, the Holy Scripture alone is the believer's standard of truth. John Paul II attempted to corrupt this absolute basis of truth set by God alone; therefore, he is to be reckoned as a false teacher.

Reaping from His Corrupted Foundation

From John Paul II's corrupted foundation, it was possible as Pope to esteem himself gifted with the divine attribute of infallibility. Thus, he stated publicly, "The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful...he proclaims with a definitive act that a doctrine of faith or morals is to be held as such."⁶ His claim to "infallible teaching authority," a divine attribute, proves unequivocally that he falls under the category of false teacher. It also implies he saw himself as divinely inspired.⁷ In addition to this dreadful arrogance, he also proclaimed in his *Catechism*, "The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, 'supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls'" (Para 937). In that assertion, he has arrogated to himself the power given to the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Thus, he has demonstrated actively from his corrupted foundation that he was not only hopelessly deceived, but he also propagated these deceptions worldwide. Therefore, his own claims show that he did not possess any sanctity before the All Holy God, but his *Catechism* shows that he did possess a terrible pride.

Nonetheless, the Roman Catholic world desired to show him religious veneration, or worship. Once beatified, John Paul would be given the title "blessed" and could be publicly venerated. Many people, especially in Poland, have already venerated him privately, but the ceremony would make it official. Yes, many people would willingly "venerate" or worship John Paul II, as they have been taught is morally right—once officially approved by the Papacy.

Ancient Sin Encouraged

This latest entry point into necromancy simply ensured that the deceptions John Paul II taught would continue to bear much evil fruit. In fact, officially, in his *Catechism* he encouraged mankind to contact the dead. He publicly taught, "*Communion*

with the dead... Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping 'them, but also of making their intercession for us effective'" (Para 958). "We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world" (Para 2683). Supposed communion with the dead and deification of the dead has held a prominent place in nearly every system of paganism. The dead are consulted to give help to the living, which is the alluring charm of the occult. The practice of communicating with the spirits of the departed is sinful, since the Word of the Lord forbids it: "*There shall not be found among you any one... that useth divination...or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer [one who calls up the dead]*" (*Deuteronomy 18:10-11*). John Paul II's teaching on communion with the dead is quite similar to what one finds in the pages of the occult. Prayer to God is one form of worship to God. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded worship in prayer to God alone, "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*" (*Matthew 4:10*). He gave the definitive command that communication in worship is due to God alone and must not be given to any creature. "*I am the LORD thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me*" (*Exodus 20:2-3*).

It was not simply that John Paul II recognized and approved of "communion with the dead," he created more and more personages to be contacted, and did it with great speed. Actually John Paul II created more saints and beatified more people than all the Popes before him put together. Thus he named 477 men and women as saints, and beatified 1,318 others.

Exchange of Merit between Believer and Dead "Saint"

During his lifetime, John Paul II continued his teaching regarding the dead by declaring that there is an interchange of holiness in expiation of sin, shared even with the dead in purgatory. In his *Catechism*, he officially stated,

In the communion of saints, "a perennial link of charity exists between the faithful who have already reached their heavenly home, those who are expiating their sins in purgatory and those who are still pilgrims on earth. Between them there is, too, an abundant exchange of all good things." In this wonderful exchange, the holiness of one profits others, well beyond the harm that the sin of one could cause others. (Para 1475)

⁶ *Catechism*, Para 891.

⁷ In the words of *2 Thessalonians 2:4* "above all that is called God." "Above" can mean "in a place of" or "as much as."

Again, John Paul II has revealed that he was not blessed; rather, he officially taught damnable heresy. Factually, an abundant exchange of all good things in Scripture is in Christ alone, “*in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*” (*Ephesians 1:7*). To assign Christ’s role to humans, including the dead ones, is a serious contradiction of God’s truth. God’s righteousness, which is credited to the believer at Christ’s expense, fills the believer again and again with awe, worship, and praise to the Holy God, Who Himself has provided the permanent finished work of justification for sin. To purport an imputation of righteousness outside of Him is preposterous in face of Biblical truth. Jesus Himself said, “*Truly, truly, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber*” (*John 10:1*).

The assertion of an exchange of merit between the believer and dead “saints” was egregious effrontery against the Biblical truth that God alone justifies the sinner. John Paul II greatly enlarged the list of officially acceptable Roman Catholic idols. In giving glory, honor, and communion in prayer, which is due to God alone, to the spirits of departed humans, the Pope flagrantly sinned against the Lord God and His First Commandment. That prohibition includes an acknowledgement that He alone is God; therefore, in prayer we worship Him alone. It sets our affections entirely upon Him alone.

John Paul II, who practiced and warmly encouraged idolatry, would have been given his place officially among the Roman Catholic idols. The Papacy turns a blind eye to the fact that terrible, immutable judgment awaits each and every person who dies embracing such forbidden practices. For Bible believers, this sobering consideration ought to turn the official declaration of May 1, 2011 into a day of mourning. It is our prayer to God alone that those still trapped by, or being enticed into, these destructive pagan practices might be turned to Christ Jesus through the proclamation of the true Gospel.

The Faith and Practice of John Paul II

As Pope, John Paul II believed that he had sacraments that were capable of sanctifying the hearts and souls of men and women. In the *Code of Canon Law*, which he revised and republished, he taught that a person is reborn by the sacrament of baptism. He stated, “Through baptism men and women are

freed from sin, are reborn as children of God, and, configured to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated in the [Catholic] Church” (Canon 849). Then, by the physical sacrament of Confirmation, he claimed a spiritual outpouring like that of Pentecost itself. John Paul II stated, “The effect of Confirmation is a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit like that of Pentecost. This outpouring impresses on the soul an indelible character and produces a growth in the grace of Baptism.”⁸

He then claimed that people have their sins forgiven when a Roman Catholic priest utters over them the words, “I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” In his estimation, these words were so important that he insisted that to obtain reconciliation with God one must confess all serious sins to a priest. The exact assertion that the Pope authorized was the following, “One who desires to obtain reconciliation with God and with the [Roman Catholic] Church, must confess to a priest all the unconfessed grave sins he remembers after having carefully examined his conscience.”⁹

Pope John Paul II believed, by the words of consecration at a Roman Catholic mass, the bread and wine are literally changed into the body of Christ—together with His soul and divinity. His official teaching reads as follows,

By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity.¹⁰

This official teaching of John Paul II led the Catholic priest, John O’Brien, to express his thoughts on how the consecration of bread and wine by the priest at Mass works. O’Brien wrote,

While the Blessed Virgin was the human agency by which Christ became incarnate a single time, the priest brings Christ down from heaven, and renders Him present on our altar as the eternal Victim for the sins of man—not once, but a thousand times! The priest speaks and lo!

⁸ *Catechism*, Para 1316.

⁹ *Catechism*, Para 1493.

¹⁰ *Catechism*, Para 1413.

Christ, the eternal and omnipotent God, bows his head in humble obedience to the priest's command.¹¹

Such heretical teaching denies the very nature of the Incarnation. Christ Jesus became incarnate a single time, and forever, and His incarnation is never to be repeated. If what John Paul II and John O'Brien believed were true, then in the same Mass "Christ" would be de-incarnated, once the communicant had physically absorbed the elements and they no longer contained "Christ." What a horrific, blasphemous insult this teaching is, for it both assails Christ Jesus, His sovereignty, and deceives people. John Paul II even claimed that power effectively flowed from the Communion element itself. Thus, his official teaching was "By the same charity that it enkindles in us, the Eucharist preserves us from future mortal sins."¹²

Consequently, John Paul II taught his people to look to "it," a physical thing, as a means of conveying God's grace, teaching a person to look to a physical thing as if it had supernatural power. Such a teaching comes under the eternal curse of perverting the Gospel of Christ.¹³ To propose an oral ingesting of Christ's flesh is bad enough; however, what John Paul II taught is much worse. He declared that it "preserves us from future mortal sins." These enticing words of human philosophy teach the age-old practice of looking to a physical substance in order to procure life.

What makes the doctrine all the more repulsive is that this very teaching, which speaks of preserving from serious sin, is itself a blasphemous sin. John Paul II's beliefs and practices were, in fact, spiritually lethal hazards. He presented physical things as if they were powers themselves and necessary for salvation. Thus, it was that John Paul II proposed his church's physical sacraments as the inherent means of obtaining the grace of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, his official teaching declared, "The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*. 'Sacramental grace' is the grace of the

Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament."¹⁴

Inculcating dependence on these physical sacraments, instead of direct faith on the Lord Christ Jesus, was the scheme of John Paul II. It deflected faith from the person of Christ to rituals that are claimed to be powers. He explicitly called them "powers" as he stated, "Sacraments are 'powers that come forth' from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving."¹⁵

True Christians see God's power proclaimed in "*the gospel of Christ...the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*" (Romans 1:16), each one "*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 3:24). Thus, John Paul II's faith and practice were not those of a person that is blessed in the sight of God, indeed, quite the opposite.

The Character of John Paul II

The character of John Paul II was presented as resplendent in humility and compassion, earnestly going about to bring peace and unity to the world. Underneath the façade, however, was an iron-fisted hold on people in terms of law. Like Pope Gregory VII in the eleventh century, John Paul II determined to build an empire by meticulous laws. He was adamant in his efforts to update the laws of the Roman Catholic Church. Since the days of Gregory VII, Popes have seen the necessity of making inflexible church laws before attempting to control their subjects and others, by compulsion if necessary. Thus, it was in 1983 that John Paul II revised the 1917 *Code of Canon Law*. He added laws to those already existing, such as the following, "The Church has an innate and proper right to coerce offending members of the Christian faithful by means of penal sanctions" (Canon 1311). Examination of his extra laws shows them to be even more totalitarian than those of the past. For example, in clearer terms than any cult, John Paul II decreed the necessity of suppressing one's God-given faculties of the mind and will. His law stated, "A religious respect of intellect and will, even if not the assent of faith, is to be paid to the teaching which the Supreme Pontiff..." (Canon 752).

The consequences of not submitting were spelled out in his laws: "The following are to be punished

¹¹ John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions: The Credentials of the Catholic Religion* Revised ed. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1974), 256.

¹² *Catechism*, Para 1395. Italics indicates emphasis in original; bolding indicates emphasis added in this paper.

¹³ "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:9).

¹⁴ *Catechism*, Para 1129.

¹⁵ *Catechism*, Para 1116.

with a just penalty: 1. a person who... teaches a doctrine condemned by the Roman Pontiff..." (Canon 1371, Para 1). Specific penalties are also decreed by John Paul II: "The law can establish other expiatory penalties which deprive a believer of some spiritual or temporal good and are consistent with the supernatural end of the Church" (Canon 1312, Para 2).

John Paul II Imposed Greater Control over Roman Catholic Church

John Paul II knew right well how to enforce his will in law. In few other activities was his genius more conspicuous than in this. There were no checks and balances to his absolute power and authority. In the official commentary on his Canon Law is the following,

The Church's governmental system is vastly different from the notion of a balance of powers. In fact, the three functions are situated in the same office.... Unlike the American system, ecclesiastical law does not arise from the will of the governed, nor does the [Roman Catholic] Church's juridical structure rely on a system of checks and balances to maintain its effectiveness.... The Code promotes this system through a hierarchical structure that is more vertical than horizontal. Ultimately, the highest judge, the Pope, is also the highest legislator and administrator....¹⁶

The imposition of John Paul II will was clearly seen in an article in the *Catholic World Report* called, "Rome Has Spoken—Again." The article stated the following,

"The Pope Moves to Stamp Out Liberal Debate on Heated Issues," headlined the *New York Times* in a front-page story, warning darkly of possible "just punishment" for dissenters.... In another front-page story, the *Washington Post* introduced its coverage with a headline reading, "Papal Letter is Divisive, Critics Say," nor did the *Post* fail to add the obligatory sub-headline about how "Dissent on Dogma Risks Punishment...."¹⁷

Then, in order to push forward John Paul II's ecumenical agenda to ensnare Evangelicals, Lutherans, and Anglicans into accepting Roman Catholicism as a valid form of Christianity, the Vatican announced that an apology was to be made for the Inquisition. However, during a Mass on March 12, 2000 in which this was to be done, John Paul II merely asked pardon for wrongs committed in the past by members of the Roman Catholic Church. The fact is, as he right well knew, that individual members of the Roman Catholic Church did not order the systematic murder of believers and confiscation of their private property during the 605 years of the Inquisition. Rather, as Lord Acton, who was himself a Roman Catholic, observed, it was "the Popes in particular that caused and instigated the sufferings and persecutions, involving themselves in detail even in the minute ways that believers were to be tortured."¹⁸ Thus, while John Paul II appeared to be eminently pious, when one studies his laws, decrees, verdicts, and deeds; he was a despot with dictatorial power.

Solemn warnings are given in Scripture concerning such veneer that conceals devious people, who "are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:13-14). As a consequence from just what is documented here, it becomes clear that the character of John Paul II was not that of a person exalted in God's sight, and not one who personally knew Him as Lord and Savior. Rather, he is one to be exposed that others might not fall into the deceptions and traps that he perpetrated on the Roman Catholic world, the Evangelical world, and any who would pay attention to him.

Accursed before the Lord God

It is quite evident that John Paul II was not, and is not, blessed in the sight of God. What then was he? In his own estimation, he saw himself as the absolutely supreme authority on Earth. Accordingly, on October 8, 2000, under his assumed title of Vicar of Christ,¹⁹ he consecrated the world and the new millennium to "Mary Most Holy."²⁰ By such a

¹⁸ *Letters to Mary Gladstone* as cited in William Shaw Kerr, *Roman Catholic Persecution and Inquisition*, 235.

¹⁹ *Catechism*, Para 882.

²⁰ "The culminating moment of the Jubilee of Bishops was the Mass concelebrated by the Pope and Bishops in St. Peter's Square on Sunday morning, 8 October. Tens of thousands of the faithful gathered for the sacred liturgy, which concluded with

¹⁶ *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, Donald E. Heintschel, eds. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 2.

¹⁷ Msgr. Michael J. Wrenn and Kenneth D. Whitehead in *The Catholic World Report*, August-September 1998, 44-52.

blasphemous act, he made mockery of the First Commandment. By these and other blasphemous, official acts, John Paul II demonstrated who he truly was. Overtly and unequivocally, he fulfilled the definition of “*the man of sin*.”²¹ The same John Paul, who assumed to himself the titles of “Holy Father” and “Vicar of Christ,” fulfilled in an unqualified sense the definition of the Antichrist given by the Apostle John, “*who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*” (1 John 2:22). John Paul II, in taking these designations of Holy Father and Vicar of Christ, denied both the Father and the Son and again showed whom he was. Even in his *Catechism* he took to himself Christ’s office of supreme and universal power over the whole Church. Thus he decreed, “For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, namely, and as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered” (Para 882).

John Paul II was the worst enemy of Christ who, under the pretense of service to Him, presumed to undermine His unique offices by blatantly attempting to usurp His position and power. Most serious of all is the fact that John Paul II stated unequivocally that there is “an abundant exchange of all good things,” in so-called “communion with the dead.”²² In the same paragraph he elaborates, “In this wonderful exchange, the holiness of one profits others, well beyond the harm that the sin of one could cause others.” This in fact is a straight denial of the Gospel of Christ. There is no known record of John Paul II’s recantation of any of this. Yet the Lord’s written Word, which John Paul had in his possession as part of his authority base, proclaims, “*If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*” (Galatians 1:9). This must be the utterly grave and somber conclusion of the matter; *i.e.*, before the tribunal of God’s absolute Word, John Paul II has shown himself to be accursed by his own words. With the deepest concern, therefore, we reach out with the true

Gospel to those who live their lives under the damnable teaching that this man had propagated.

Bible Believers’ Response

We carefully analyze John Paul’s beliefs and practices because the Lord commands us “*to contend for the faith once given to the saints*” with “*compassion, making a difference*” (Jude 3, 23). As the Lord told us, “*in the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33). In Him, we are commanded that “*having done all, to stand...stand therefore*” (Ephesians 6:13-14). We, therefore, have total assurance that the Lord God is with us. The certainty of the final triumph should animate our effort and encourage us in our struggle. In the midst of spectacular pageantry surrounding the beatification of John Paul II, we pray the Lord would save just as He did in the midst of the splendor of the Pope’s visit to the UK in September 2010.

Let the Gospel trumpet sound! On the authority of Scripture, let it be known that sinners are justified by grace only, through faith only, in Christ Jesus only! And to God only be the glory! The clear resounding cry is the command of the Lord Himself, “*This is the work of God that you believe on him whom He has sent*” (John 6:29). “*Repent and believe the gospel*” (Mark 1:15). Where there is true faith and love of the Lord, there is in the midst of all afflictions a joy unspeakable and full of glory. God is the only Holy Father, the All Holy One. His holiness is the distinguishing factor in all His essential characteristics. This is the reason why we 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, in Christ alone, for the salvation that He alone gives by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, based on Christ’s death and resurrection for His own. Believe on Him alone, “*to the praise of the glory of his grace*” (Ephesians 1:6).

Berean Beacon has a new DVD called, *The Original Early Church*. The topic of who the early believers were, where they lived, and just what they taught is very important. We have the Vaudois and Waldenses as great examples leading up to the pre-Reformation believers. In this DVD, Pastor W. J. Mencarow and Richard Bennett clearly document the actual historical facts. It can be viewed at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8BjmtC8_ps.

the Act of Entrustment to Mary Most Holy.” *L’Osservatore Romano* Weekly edition in English, 11 October 2000.

²¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, “*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*”

²² *Catechism*, Para 1475.