



About the Author

William C. Standridge is an American missionary who has lived in Rome, Italy since 1953. He has studied the Italian background of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the daily news events which have shaken and shaped its recent history.

His ability to read, write and speak fluently in Italian has given the author a unique opportunity to follow the political and religious situation in Italy. He is able to present documentation of the Roman Catholic Church which is not available to many American pastors, teachers or laymen. Mr. Standridge writes regularly in the Italian-language monthly newspaper, "La Voce del Vangelo". He has read widely and is well acquainted with the ecumenical movement, new-evangelicalism and the charismatic movement.

An ordained fundamental Baptist minister, Mr. Standridge is a missionary to Italy with Independent Faith Mission. Along with his father, he helped in the original organization and founding of Independent Faith Mission.

His ministry in Italy has resulted in the establishment of local New Testament churches. He writes Gospel messages which appear in leading secular Italian publications which reach millions of Italians with the Gospel.

Mr. Standridge's previous book, "What's Happening in the Roman Church", has received wide interest and is now in its second edition. His books would be of special help to Christians regarding the latest trends in the Roman Catholic Church.

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BORN-AGAIN CATHOLICS

and the MASS

A REPORT FROM ROME

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Born-Again Catholics and the Mass
by William C. Standridge, Jr.

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FOREWORD

This book is written especially for three types of persons.

First, it is written for professing Roman Catholics who have had what they sincerely believe to be a "born again experience". It will help them to clarify the meaning of that experience and to understand God's will as to their future.

Second, it is written for non-catholics who have friends or relatives who are practising Roman Catholics, who may, or may not yet have professed to be "born again".

Third, it will be helpful to all others who have been interested in the recent, wide use of the words, "born again".

Even though I am a "born again" non-catholic, my purpose is not merely polemical. I do not wish to misrepresent what the Roman Catholic church officially teaches, or what any particular Roman Catholic may personally believe.

After having read carefully the official Documents of the Vatican Council II (**The Documents of Vatican II, with Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities**, Walter M. Abbott, S. J., General Editor, Geoffrey Chapman, London-Dublin, Editors; Copyright 1966 by the America Press), as well as many other articles and books on the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic church, I believe that as a sincere Christian, I can do no less than contribute to the clarification of an often confusing, and neglected, subject.

William C. Standridge, Jr.

Rome, Italy



Pope John Paul II saying Mass in St. Peter's Square in Rome, Italy, following his election.

CHAPTER

1

IS EXPERIENCE ENOUGH?

Tens of thousands of Americans have added a new phrase to their vocabulary. You hear it on TV talk shows, read it on bookjackets, see it in the newspaper, and hear it discussed by sociologists.

The phrase is "born again".

For Bible-believing Christians, the term is an old and precious acquaintance. It comes to them from the Bible itself. Jesus told Nicodemus: "Ye must be born again". And the Apostle Peter wrote: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God" (1 Peter 1:23).

For many of us, the new popularity of "born again" is a bit like having a boyhood friend, unknown and unappreciated, suddenly become President of General Motors. You begin reading his name in all the newspapers. People you never heard of constantly refer to him as one of their boyhood

chums. You hear that he's just been received by the Queen of England, decorated by the Pope in Rome, wined and dined by leaders of the Common Market. You can hardly keep from pinching yourself and asking, "Can that really be my old buddy? It's the right name, but all that action just doesn't fit the boy I knew".

It's the same problem with "born again". Is it possible that the old phrase I knew and loved really fits presidents and presidential candidates, Hollywood actors and Las Vegas showgirls?

And what about "born again" Catholics? People say there are tens of thousands of them, both laymen and priests and nuns. Can that be true? To raise the questions sounds to some like bigotry, or like a reverse Inquisition in the 20th Century.

Frankly, there are a series of questions which must be raised, and answered. Otherwise, both Catholics and Bible-believing Protestants are going to be hopelessly confused. And confusion helps no one.

Here are the types of questions which are being raised: Are there really thousands of "born again" Roman Catholics? What is the difference between "born again" Catholics and non "born again" Roman Catholics? Is there a difference between "born again" Catholics and "born again" Protestants? In what ways do Catholics change, or should they change, after they have been "born again"?

Those questions raise other questions: Is everyone who says he is "born again" or **thinks** he is "born again", **really** "born again"? If some people **think they are**, but aren't, does that make any difference? Are they kidding themselves, or are others giving them false information?

What the whole problem really boils down to is this: What does it really mean to be "born again" and how does a "born again" person show it? Then in the second place, can a "born again" Roman Catholic sincerely continue to profess official Roman Catholic doctrine and participate in Roman Catholic rites?

Since the phrase "born again" was first used by the Lord Jesus, what did Jesus mean when he told Nicodemus that he must be "born again"? The phrase confused Nicodemus himself. Just how could one go about getting a really new start in life through a process of new birth? Jesus explained that He was not talking about another start of physical life, but the beginning of a spiritual life. The "new birth" was a spiritual necessity, an invisible reality. Chapter 3 of the Gospel of John makes clear that the "new birth" comes through looking by faith to "the only-begotten Son of God" for salvation, just as snake-bitten, dying Israelites had looked in faith at a brazen serpent that Moses had made, at God's orders, to obtain physical healing. The last verse of this chapter promises that all who believe in Christ possess "eternal life", which is the fruit of being "born again".

As a result of Jesus' clear explanation, Bible-believing Christians have always believed that "born again" was an accurate way of explaining what it means to "be saved", to "become a Christian", or to receive the gift of eternal life.

In the Bible, this tremendous fact is also explained in many other ways, and the factors involved in salvation are set out distinctly: expiation, propitiation, redemption, justification, regeneration, adoption, resurrection, sanctification. All these words describe God's action for the sinner, or in the sinner, so that he may be "born again".

TV talk-shows often use the phrase, "the born-again experience", and there is nothing wrong with that phrase. Being "born again" often involves a subjective, emotional **experience**. For some it is traumatic, for others very gentle. It may involve tears, laughter, or feelings of peace, relief from tension or fear, a new purpose in life, new energy.

But, are any or all of these **experiences** enough to guarantee that one has been "born again"? Of course not. Many find that falling in love, passing through the danger of death, taking a psychological treatment, or

having a deep religious experience (in any religion) brings the same effect.

Many Protestants have deep, emotional "religious" experiences but are not "born again". The same can be said of many Catholics and of many irreligious people. Such experiences may come from listening to great music, watching the sunset, being present at the birth of a child, attending Mass, praying to a saint, attending a charismatic meeting, listening to a Bible-quoting preacher, responding to an altar call to "commit one's life to Christ" or in many other ways. Some even say they have had that type of an experience through drugs or through sex.

Having a purging, transforming experience may be good, but it's not necessarily the same as being "born again". Changing your way of life, accepting new ideals, finding new meaning in existence can be good, but it's not necessarily the same as being "born again". Singing hymns can be inspiring; reading Scripture can be comforting, participating in soul-baring, testimony-sharing meetings can be electrifying, but none of these guarantee that you have been "born again".

Confusion on this point is rampant. Tens of thousands of persons have been led to believe that they are "born again" when this may not be true. They have had emotional experiences, they are sincerely participating in religious activities, but they are not really "saved". In this case, they are lost, going to hell.

America's great boom of "born again" Christians is apparently one of Satan's masterpieces. The reason is two-fold.

First, as Jesus sorrowfully predicted, many in the day of judgement will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name have done many wonderful works?" (Matthew 7:22), and the Lord will say, "I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23). "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Second, the public announcement that some unsaved sinners, who profess wrong doctrine and live in disobedience to the Word of God, are "born again Christians" is deceiving and confusing the truly born again. Many are beginning to doubt if right doctrine is important, or if experience is not more important than doctrine. This also means that true Christians are induced to try to work together with, study the Bible with, and fellowship with, so called "born again" people who still profess wrong doctrine, follow un-Biblical religious practices, and live by non-Christian standards. A final result may be that: such misinformed Christians oppose the evangelisation, at home or on the mission field, of those whom they falsely believe to be "born again".

This book is written in the sincere desire to help, with humility and love, whoever has fallen victim to either of these errors. Either believing that he is "born again", when that is not true, according to the Bible, or believing that his friends or acquaintances may be "born again" when that is not true. My special desire is to help Roman Catholics, and those who have Roman Catholic friends, avoid these dangerous errors.



The sacred wafer, or Host, is placed on the tongue of a communicant by the hand of the priest.

CHAPTER

2

OVER 2000 BISHOPS EXPLAIN THE MASS

I am neither revealing a dark secret nor offending members of the Roman Catholic church when I say that there is often confusion within that church itself as to its stand on certain issues and even as to its present definition of certain dogmas of the past.

In my own experience, I have received widely varying answers to simple questions, on the Mass, confession, papal infallibility, the cult of Mary and the saints, when I have talked with sincere, practising laymen, and even with well-informed priests. This is the reflection of the new liberty of discussion, and the wider publicity of its problems, which the Roman Church has known since the papacy of Pope John XXIII.

And yet it is not really difficult to discover the real, official positions on these problems, if one will study with care the documents of the Second Vatican Council. No matter what individual Catholics may prefer to believe the position of their church to be, no matter how sincerely some priests may wish the official position of the church were different; it is hypocrisy, or ignorance, to deny that the Church has one, and only one, **official**

position. And that the most complete and up-to-date official statement of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice are the decrees, laboriously formulated by more than two thousand bishops of the church, aided by more hundreds of experts, researchers, advisers and theologians, and personally approved word by word by the Pope, between October 11, 1962, and December 8, 1965.

The official documents of the Second Vatican Council contain 103,014 words in the original Latin version, divided into four Constitutions, nine Decrees, and three Declarations.

Since it is probable that most non-Catholics have never read the official documents of Vatican Council II, and therefore may be uninformed, or misinformed, about Roman Catholic doctrine, it would be most interesting to present numerous excerpts. But it would also be time-consuming and go far beyond our purpose.

Still, in order to understand the position in which Roman Catholics who profess to be "born again" find themselves, it is necessary to look into at least one document and one subject.

No sincere Roman Catholic can profess to be a practising Catholic without participating regularly in the Mass. Recent changes in the way of celebrating the Mass, in the amount of lay participation, in the use of local languages and customs, in permission for experimentation, have wrongly induced many to believe that the meaning of the Mass itself has been changed in some way. This is a grave and dangerous error.

The following are significant excerpts from the Vatican II documents on the Mass, also called the Eucharistic sacrifice, or the Eucharist. That in bold is mine for emphasis.

*It is through the liturgy, especially the **divine Eucharistic Sacrifice**, that "the work of our **redemption is exercised**". (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, paragraph 2).*

Under this sign the scattered sons of God are being gathered into one (cf. Jn. 11:52) until there is one fold and one shepherd (cf. Jn. 10:16). (ibid, para. 2).

*Just as Christ was sent by the Father, so also he sent the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit...that they might **exercise the work of salvation** which they were proclaiming, **by means of sacrifice and sacraments**, around which the entire liturgical life revolves. (ibid, para. 6)*

*To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the **sacrifice of the Mass**, not only in the person of His minister, "**the same one now offering**, through the ministry of priests, **who formerly offered himself on the cross**", but especially under the Eucharistic species. (ibid, para. 7)*

*Nevertheless, **the liturgy is the summit** toward which the activity of the Church is directed, at the same time, it is the fountain from which all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic works is that all who are **made sons of God by faith and baptism** should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in **her sacrifice**, and to eat the Lord's supper...From the liturgy therefore, and especially **from the Eucharist**, as from a fountain, **grace is channeled into us...**(ibid, para. 10).*

*At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the **Eucharistic Sacrifice** of His Body and Blood. He did this in order **to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross** through the centuries. (ibid, para. 47)*

*The dogmatic principles which were laid down by **the Council of Trent remaining intact**, communion under both kinds may be granted when the bishops think fit... (ibid, para. 55).¹*



In one of the most sacred moments of the Mass, a priest offers the Host as a non-bloody sacrifice to God.

Truly partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another. (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, para. 7).

*The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, **moulds and rules** the priestly people. Acting in the person of Christ, he brings about the **Eucharistic Sacrifice**, and **offers it to God** in the name of all the people. (ibid, para. 10).*

*Taking part in the **Eucharistic Sacrifice**, which is the **fount and apex** of the whole Christian life, they **offer the divine Victim to God**, and offer themselves along with It.*

*...the priest alone can complete the building up of the Body in the **Eucharistic Sacrifice**. (ibid, para. 17).*

*As true priests of the New Testament...they exercise this sacred function of Christ most of all in the Eucharistic liturgy...they re-present and apply in the **Sacrifice of the Mass** the one sacrifice of the New Testament, namely the **sacrifice of Christ offering himself** once and for all to His Father as a spotless victim (cf. Heb. 9 28). (ibid, para. 28).*

The Ecclesial Communities separated from us lack that fullness of unity with us which should flow from baptism, and we believe that especially because of the lack of the sacrament of orders they have not preserved the genuine and total reality of the Eucharistic mystery. (Decree on Ecumenism, para. 22).

*Through the hands of priests and in the name of the whole Church, the **Lord's sacrifice is offered** in the Eucharist in an **unbloody and sacramental manner** until He himself returns. The ministry of priests is directed towards this work and perfected in it. For their ministry, which takes its start from the gospel message, **derives its power and force from the sacrifice of Christ**. (Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, para. 2).*

*Priests are taken from among men and appointed for men in the things which pertain to God, in order **to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.** (ibid, para. 3).*

*The other sacraments, as well as every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are linked with the Holy Eucharist and are directed toward it. Hence the Eucharist shows itself to be the source and the apex of the whole work of preaching the gospel. The faithful, already marked with the sacred seal of baptism and confirmation, are **through the reception of the Eucharist** fully joined to the Body of Christ.*

*Thus the Eucharistic Action is the very heartbeat of the congregation of the faithful over which the priest presides. So priests must instruct them **to offer to God the Father the divine Victim in the sacrifice of the Mass...***

*In the house of prayer the most Holy Eucharist is celebrated and preserved. There the faithful gather, and find help and comfort through **venerating the presence of the Son of God** our Saviour, offered for us on the sacrificial altar. (ibid para. 5).*

*By the preaching of the word and by the celebration of the sacraments, whose **centre and summit is the most holy Eucharist**, missionary activity brings about the presence of Christ, the Author of Salvation. (Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, para. 9).*

In the light of all these statements, drafted by scores of experts in Catholic doctrine, debated and perfected by over two thousand bishops, personally corrected, approved and promulgated by the Pope, there can be no reasonable doubt that the Roman Catholic church has an official position on the subject of the Mass, its meaning and its purpose.

Therefore, every sincere, informed, practising Roman Catholic is held to believe without reservation that:

- 1) The Mass is the central element in true Christian worship.

- 2) The Mass was instituted by Jesus Christ.
- 3) Christ is really, physically present in the sacrament of the Eucharist.
- 4) The Sacrifice of the Mass can be achieved only through the action of a priest who has received valid sacrament of orders through a Catholic bishop.
- 5) In the Mass the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is repeated.
- 6) Priest and people offer, through the sacrifice of the Mass, Christ as victim to God.
- 7) Christians may, and should, venerate the consecrated wafer of the Eucharist as the real presence of Christ.

Now the question arises: Can a person who believes these things, and participates in this religious ceremony, be a "born again" Christian according to a Biblical definition of the term? Can a truly "born again" Christian, illuminated by the Holy Spirit and faithful to the Word of God, believe these doctrines and participate in these rites?

¹The Council of Trent, held in various periods between 1545 and 1562, was the Roman Catholic response to the Reformation, and clearly defined, as infallible dogma, many teachings. Here are two of its statements on the Mass:

Canon 1 - Whosoever shall deny that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist there are truly, really, and substantially contained the body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, together with his soul and divinity, and consequently Christ entire, but shall affirm that he is present therein only in a sign and figure, or by his power, let him be accursed.

Canon 6 - Whosoever shall affirm that Christ, the only-begotten son of God, is not to be adored in the holy Eucharist with the external signs of that worship which is due to God, and therefore that the Eucharist is not to be honoured with extraordinary festive celebration, nor solemnly carried about in processions, according to the laudable and universal rites and customs of the holy Church, nor publicly presented to the people for their adoration, and that those who worship the same are idolaters, let him be accursed.

(Conc. Trid., sess. xiii, De Sac. Sanct. Euch. Sacram.)

In Canon 1, the holy wafer, called the Eucharist, is claimed to contain both the body and blood of Christ, and also his divinity, and in Canon 6 this holy wafer is to be adored as God. This dogma has never been changed!

CHAPTER

3

LET'S DEFINE OUR TERMS

Having looked carefully at the most official statement existing on the understanding and the importance of the Mass in Roman Catholic doctrine, we return to the problem of the significance of being "born again".

First, we must say that **none of the following is alone sufficient** to prove from God's word, the Bible, that a person is "born again":

- 1) A person saying he is "born again" and sincerely believing.
- 2) A person who has had a religious experience which moved him emotionally or brought about visible changes in his life.
- 3) Sincerely attempting to live as a Christian and, as a consequence, living a morally acceptable and reasonably happy life.
- 4) Having miraculous experiences, "speaking in tongues", being healed, exorcising demons.

5) Having committed one's life to Christ, prayed to Him, believing in Him, or accepting Him.

One of the reasons that none of the above is sufficient is that words mean different things to different people. Many Christians prefer to take everything at face value. They prefer avoiding controversy, and therefore never ask anyone what he means when he speaks of his faith for fear of hurting his feelings.

More serious than the human reasons for refusing to question if all so-called "born again" people are really born again, is the ignorance of basic Bible doctrine and, worse, the avoidance of serious Bible study in these areas.

But, we must define our terms. The first three of the above non-proofs of salvation are based on the idea that being good, doing good works, having an emotional experience and being sincere is enough to save one's soul. No matter how convincing that idea may sound, it is false.

The fourth non-proof is widely popular in charismatic circles, as many believe that similar experiences, which are attributed to the Holy Spirit, prove that one is "born again" no matter what false doctrines he may believe or what un-Biblical positions he may defend. In fact, all of these "miracles" are also regularly performed in non-Christian religions, so they can not be proof of being "born again".

The fifth non-proof may sound like a valid proof of salvation to many Christians who are unaware of the variety of meanings that can be attributed to these words. In some cultures, for example, "believing in Christ", "accepting Christ", or "committing one's life to Christ" is just adding Christ to the pantheon of other traditional divinities. "Believing in Christ" may mean accepting Him as a moral example, or accepting Him as a unique messenger from God. "Receiving Christ", to the informed Roman Catholic, means taking the consecrated wafer of the Eucharist on one's tongue. As we have seen in the first chapter, for the Bible-believing

Christian, being "born again" is synonymous with being saved, or receiving the spiritual gift of eternal life. While this may, or may not, be accompanied by an emotional experience, it really implies a completely new life of salvation reality: repentance, faith, regeneration, baptism into Christ by the Holy Spirit, justification and much more.

Being "born again", according to the Bible, is a supernatural, eternal, effective work of God Himself, bringing a convicted rebel who has already been judged worthy of death, into the intimate relationship of son-ship.

The means that God uses is faith alone, as Paul says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9). Therefore it is true that salvation, or being born again, depends on faith, or believing. But believing what?

John says that being "born again" comes by receiving. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). But receiving whom? And how?

It is obvious that believing and receiving must have definite objects. How do we learn how to believe, or in whom to believe?

Jesus said that we must first hear and believe His Word. "Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

Paul wrote that salvation comes by receiving Christ's word. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Peter said that we are "born again" by the Word. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (I Peter 1:23).

So you see that it is a cruel deception to teach that one can be "born again" apart from the hearing, the understanding and the submission by faith to the message of the Word of God, the Bible. Yet many of today's "born again Christians" do not believe the Bible to be the Word of God, did not accept by faith Jesus Christ as their Saviour after clearly understanding what the Bible says and means, by this affirmation, nor do they attend churches where the Bible is accepted as God's infallible Word to man.

In the secularized, humanistic society in which we live, many have been taught that God is only a symbol for the human ideal of perfection, that sin is only a psychological or moral flaw in one's personality and that Jesus Christ is a Saviour only in the sense that He liberates men from their defects and "hang-ups". When these people, with all their ignorance and misinformation, listen to a simple evangelistic message, or to the brief presentation of "four laws", their emotions may be touched, a consciousness of spiritual need may be stirred up, they may be ready to pray, or to "commit their lives to Christ". They may then be told that they are "born again", and their emotional experience may become a precious memory. But thousands of these are not born again at all, according to the Scriptures. They have not really understood the simple truths of the Bible regarding Christ and salvation.

Several simple statements in the Bible describe the human side of the salvation experience. Nevertheless, in spite of their simplicity, each is absolute truth, if understood in the way God intended in the Bible. By God's grace it is possible to receive Jesus Christ by faith while still in ignorance of all the Bible says. But holding to false doctrine could make it easier to receive a false Jesus and a false Holy Spirit, as described in 2 Corinthians 11:4. "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have

not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him" (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

It is impossible to separate John's statement, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12) from the accompanying revelation in John 1:1-5 and 1:14, which is deeply theological. Otherwise one cannot know whom he is "receiving" or the significance of the "name" on which he is believing.

In Philip's evangelisation of the Ethiopian eunuch, the eunuch's affirmation of faith, before baptism, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God" was the response to a long-ranging exposition of Old Testament Scriptures regarding Jesus, his ministry and his death and resurrection.

Paul's reply to the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house" was not a magic formula for salvation, but the introduction to a long, Bible-based sermon on the subject (Acts 16:30-32).

Even the abbreviated synopsis of the Gospel which Paul presents in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, was only a review of what he preached, and not his whole message. In this passage he says, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved...how Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures..."

If Paul had considered those few phrases a magic formula by which a person could be saved, he would not have needed to explain so fully their meaning in the Epistle to the Romans, in chapters three through eight.

As a matter of fact, the Bible does not teach that there are any simplistic formulas which can guarantee the reality of a "born again experience". Each of the often-used Scripture verses which explain the heart of salvation (John 3:16, 5:24, 20:31, Romans 10:9-10), contain and

imply much more doctrinal content than is often explained, and also must be interpreted within their context, as well as within the whole context of Scripture relating to salvation.

So, we come back to the obvious fact, overlooked by too many: to be truly "born again", regenerated by the Holy Spirit, does not mean giving mental assent to a theological proposition, nor accepting, however sincerely, a Gospel which is reduced absurdly to formulas which **are unintelligible**, in their true Biblical significance, to today's religious illiterates, or to those whose philosophical or traditional teachings have conditioned them to interpret theological terminology in a non-Biblical way.

If the Gospel message is not communicated in such a way as to destroy pagan concepts and heretical doctrine, there can be no correct response, potentially resulting in a false deceptive experience instead of genuine spiritual rebirth. This true understanding of the Bible is sadly lacking in many religious groups which are in the fore-front of the "born again" revival.

Just recently a man told me that, before he was saved, he loved to listen to various evangelists on the radio and TV, and always got down on his knees at the invitation, to pray for salvation. But nothing happened! It was only after he began attending a Bible-preaching church that he was able to understand, and experience, the truth of salvation.

Not only is an understanding of basic Bible truth a presupposition to a genuine "born again experience", but adherence to Bible truth and a new life expressing the practice of Biblical truth will always be the result of that experience.

A large part of the New Testament is devoted to the description of the practical results of salvation in the life of the "born again" person. The apostle Paul admits that some who are born again remain in spiritual immaturity, and are therefore conquered by carnality, sensuality, or outright sin. But these are the exceptions.

The New Testament affirms that "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The only visible "proof" of a "born again" experience is this new life, which the apostle John describes in this way: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6-7).

Not only is there a practical test of conduct to be applied to those who claim to be "born again" but also a doctrinal test. John writes, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2 John 9-10).

There is no way that the phrase "doctrine of Christ" can be reduced to a limited formula for determining orthodoxy, apart from all that the New Testament teaches as "Christ's words", either taught by Him personally in the Gospel, or inspired by Him and taught by Him through the apostles in the Acts, the Epistles and the Revelation. Biblical truth can not be cut up into acceptable and non-acceptable parts.

Therefore, either **conduct** contrary to clear Biblical teaching, or **doctrine** contrary to clear Biblical teaching can not be logically associated with a true "born again experience". It is true, of course, that there are varying levels of understanding of Biblical truth, just as there are varying levels of obedience and spiritual health among "born again" Christians. But, when either conduct or doctrine contrary to the Bible is a regular, continuing feature of a person's life, it would be difficult to find any justifiable reason to consider him a "born again" Christian.

This does not mean that final judgement of who is "saved" or lost is

the responsibility of any man. Paul affirmed to Timothy, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his..." (2 Timothy 2:19).

If God should know some to be His children who do not demonstrate this relationship publicly either by their conduct or by their profession of right doctrine, this would certainly be no reason for any of us to hold such persons up as examples to other Christians. In fact, Paul concluded his phrase to Timothy with this warning, "And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity".

Neither God nor any truly "born again Christian" can approve of others who claim to possess the same faith, but demonstrate by their lives that they are putting their own opinions, or those of other men, above the truth as revealed by God.

CHAPTER

4

THERE IS NO ROOM FOR COMPROMISE

Can a person be a "born again" Christian and sincerely believe in the doctrine of the Mass, as officially taught by the Roman Catholic church, and participate in that Mass?

However distasteful the simple answer may be to many who believe themselves to be "born again Roman Catholics", or to others who sincerely believe their friends and relatives to be "born again Roman Catholics", the answer from the Bible, confirmed by the actions of the Roman Catholic Church through history is "No".

During the period of the Reformation, and of the Inquisition, often the decisive moment of condemnation as heretics centred upon a single fact; would the accused recognize the real presence of Christ in the consecrated wafer of the Eucharistic host, and bow down before it? If not, he was condemned to beheading, burning at the stake, or other tortures.

Men who had been Roman Catholic priests and bishops, but who had passed to evangelical convictions, saw the Mass to be a point of total, absolute separation between their former beliefs and their new found faith in the Bible as supreme authority. They could not, and would not, turn their backs on the truth of salvation by grace through faith, and return to the sacramentalism, which means salvation by rites and by the mediation of the Roman church and of the priest, represented by the Mass.

Nor could they claim salvation by faith in Christ, refusing all human traditions and idolatrous practices and, at the same time, bow before the wafer consecrated by a priest, and therefore officially considered to be the physical presence of Christ himself.

Has the Bible changed so much today that "born again", Bible believing Christians may do what their forefathers in the faith refused to do under penalty of death?

Or, on the other hand, has Roman Catholic doctrine changed and become more Biblical? Of course not. The Council of Trent is the answer of the Roman Catholic church to the Biblical discoveries of the Reformation. In the Decrees of that Council, all the doctrines which the reformers had refuted Biblically, were restated in a more absolute and unqualified form by the Roman Church. There it was stated that the Mass was the unbloody repetition of the Sacrifice of the Cross, that the consecrated Eucharistic wafer was the true presence of Christ himself, totally, physically present, that it must be worshipped as Christ himself, that only a correctly-consecrated Roman priest might celebrate the Mass, etc.

One of the phrases of the official documents of Vatican Council II is, "The dogmatic principles which were laid down by the Council of Trent remaining intact...". In other words, the Roman Catholic church of our times does not repudiate, but instead reconfirms, the doctrines of the 16th Century Council of Trent!

The sacramental value of the Mass is confirmed in the words, "from the Eucharist, grace is channelled into us".

The authority of the priest in the Mass is confirmed by the words, "The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, moulds, and rules the priestly people. Acting in the person of Christ, he brings about the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people".

That the Mass is considered an "unbloody sacrifice" is repeated in the phrase, "Through the hands of priest...the Lord's sacrifice is offered in an unbloody and sacramental manner...".

That the Mass is a part of the works necessary for salvation is repeated in the words, "Through the liturgy, especially the Eucharistic Sacrifice...the work of our redemption is exercised...The work of salvation...by means of sacrifice and sacraments...".

The "real presence" of Christ in the Eucharist is reconfirmed numerous times. "He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass...now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross. Our Lord instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross...".

The faithful are still taught to venerate, or offer worship to, the Eucharistic wafer, with these words, "venerating the presence of the Son of God our Saviour, offered for us on the sacrificial altar".

Biblical students have not hesitated to use the words "blasphemous" and "idolatrous" concerning these Roman Catholic teachings and practices.

That Christ may be physically re-created by the speaking of a formula of Latin words, so that He can be physically eaten by those who participate in the Mass, is considered to be blasphemous by those who believe that His holy body was resurrected from the tomb and physically elevated to Heaven, where He is now seated at the right hand of God.



The consecrated wafer is being carried through the streets in a gold-plated monstrance, for the worship of the faithful.

That the consecrated Eucharistic wafer should be considered the body of Christ, to be carried in procession, or to be elevated before the faithful for their veneration in every repetition of the Mass, seems to be exactly the type of idolatry that both Old and New Testaments decry as rebellion against God and refusal of His reality as Spirit.

That the Mass can be called an "unbloody" repetition of the Sacrifice of the Cross, seems both blasphemous and heretical. Blasphemous because Christ's body can never again be subjected to sacrifice, and heretical because only bloody sacrifices are of benefit for the remission of sin.

Chapters nine and ten of the Epistle to the Hebrews contrast the sacrifice of Christ and His eternal priesthood, with the sacrifices of the Old Testament and the constant renewing of human priests.

"This man (Christ), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). There are no more offerings for sin, nor are there any repetitions of that unique sacrifice.

"Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Therefore an "unbloody" sacrifice in the Mass is a heretical addition to the plan of God, and a forbidden means of seeking the remission of sins.

The witness of the martyrs of the Christian faith is against the Mass. The witness of the infallible Word of God condemns the Mass not only as useless, but as false and heretical. It is an offence to God and falsely offers hope of salvation and of the pardon of sins, falsely offers the promise of "grace" to those who participate.

Now, what do "born again Catholics" do about the Mass? Or what should they do?

Many of them defend it, and become more fervent in attending the Mass after their "born again experience".

Others are uneasy in their conscience, and try to re-interpret its meaning to bring it more into line with Biblical teaching, and with the New Testament. But they still attend and participate!

Others quit attending the Mass, but continue to consider themselves as Catholics, waiting for the Roman church to "catch up" with them in the "renewal" which they are convinced is under way.

Many "born again Catholics" are joining Protestants in charismatic groups in home meetings, where a mixture of truth and error, built on an unstable foundation of sincerity and subjective experience, convince them they are able to receive spiritual help and health outside the Roman church, while participating formally in its services.

Still other "born again" Catholics rapidly learn, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that they can no longer participate in Catholic rites, and they soon find fellowship and spiritual food in a Bible-believing local church. This is, it seems to me, the only logical conclusion for those who are truly illuminated and regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

Trying to re-define the Mass means only that one becomes a bad Catholic because the official definition, infallibly approved by the Pope, is that of the Vatican Council II. Avoiding the Mass completely means that one is a "lapsed" Catholic and that in effect, no matter what he may call himself, he is not really a believing, practising Roman Catholic any longer.

It is extremely important that both Catholics and non-Catholics understand clearly the importance of this conclusion.

Of course, many Catholics sincerely consider themselves to be "born again". In fact, according to Roman Catholic doctrine, they are "born again" at the moment in which they were baptised as infants. The official documents of Vatican Council II reconfirm the adherence of the Roman Catholic church to the ancient heresy of baptismal regeneration.

"...the work of salvation...by means of sacrifice and sacraments...by baptism, men are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ: they die with him, are buried with him, and rise with him" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, para. 6).

"...all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism..." (ibid, para. 10).

"...a new rite is to be drawn up which manifests more fittingly and clearly that the infant, baptised by the short rite, has already been received into the Church." (ibid, para. 69).

"...all those justified by faith through baptism are incorporated into Christ." (Decree on Ecumenism, para. 2).

"...the gospel message draws men to faith and the sacraments of salvation." (Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, para. 4).

"...by baptism men are brought into the people of God" (ibid, para. 4).

"...to celebrate the paschal mystery at whose solemn ceremonies they are reborn to Christ through baptism." (Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, para. 14).

In the light of all that we have quoted from official Roman Catholic documents, which can be consulted in their entirety by anyone who desires to purchase a copy in a Catholic book store, it is obvious that the Roman Catholic understanding of the "new birth" and that of the evangelical, or fundamental Christian, are practically exact opposites. If a Catholic believes the official teachings of his church, he believes he can be saved only through the mediation of the Church, through the ministry of Roman Catholic priests, through the sacrifices and sacraments which the church administers. A Bible-believing Christian believes that he can be saved only by renouncing every human tradition, rite and work, and trusting solely in Christ.

It is essential to clarify again what it means to be born again, and how

you, your relatives and friends, can know you are "born again".

By denying that emotional upheavals, mystical experiences, or simplistic doctrinal formulas can guarantee that one is "born again" I do not mean that it is difficult to be "born again" or to know it. There is no catechism class or theological training that one must take in order to be saved. But, at the same time, there are certain, simple Bible doctrines which are at the basis of true salvation. Uncertainty, or denial of any one of them would certainly suggest that one was not ready to understand or accept the Bible as God's word, showing the way of salvation.

What are these simple, basic fundamentals of Biblical salvation?

1) The Bible is the Word of God and all information about salvation, and the certainty of salvation, is based upon its infallible revelation of God and His will for man.

2) Jesus Christ is truly, eternally God, and became truly man, in order to suffer death in our place.

3) Jesus died to pay the full penalty for our sins, and rose physically to conquer death and to seal our justification.

4) Salvation is "by grace" and not by any mixture of grace and human merits, human works, sacraments, etc.

5) Salvation is "through faith" and therefore not through rites such as baptism, confirmation, first communion, Mass, etc.

6) Christ's death on the cross was a total, once-for-all, sufficient offering for sin, and can not be repeated, renewed, or re-offered.

7) Those who are justified by faith possess eternal life here and now, and need not fear either hell or purgatory.

8) Being "born again" makes one a "new creature", a "temple of the Holy Spirit" and therefore his life will be radically changed in its attitudes, values, aims, and conduct.

Of course, these are not all of the Biblical truths regarding salvation, or God's entire eternal plan and work. And it is even possible that many persons are truly "born again" without having consciously considered each of these points and carried out a detailed Bible study on them.

But, it must be immediately clear that no one can claim to be a "born again Christian", living a truly Christian life, who ignores them, denies them, or in his religious worship, acts contrary to them.

There are many Roman Catholics, and Protestants of various types, who may be truly "born again" without, **at the moment**, understanding all that has happened to them, and all the consequences which their new life in Christ will bring, if they are obedient to His Word.

Nevertheless, it is inconceivable that a "born again Roman Catholic" not discover rapidly that he no longer needs either the Mass nor the priest to have his sins forgiven, or to worship God. Not only will he find them useless, but repugnant, since they contrast with the truths he is learning from the reading and study of the Word of God.

There is only one official Roman Catholic position on the Mass. That position is anti-Biblical. If the "born again Roman Catholic" refuses that interpretation, but continues to participate in the Mass, he is a bad Catholic and is fooling only himself. If he accepts that interpretation, he is denying the Word of God, and disobeying its teachings.

It is extremely important that this fact be clear. Born again evangelicals are well aware of the differences of interpretation and emphasis permitted within Protestantism, and may believe that the same is true in the Roman church. But it is absolutely false for any layman, priest or nun to say that he is a faithful Roman Catholic and at the same time not accept the official Roman Catholic doctrine on the Mass. The Roman church does not permit democratic diversity or varying interpretations in matters of dogma. The official position of the **magisterium**, the teaching authority of the hierarchy under the Pope, is binding on all Catholics.

CHAPTER

5

A QUESTION OF LIFE AND DEATH

The apostle Paul made some alarming comments about those who would profess to accept two contrasting ways of salvation, or who preach another way from that of God's grace appropriated in one's life by simple faith in God's Word and in Christ's death and resurrection.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). In Paul's time the Catholic Mass did not exist, nor did a Roman priesthood. His simple gospel of salvation did not need them and any other "gospel" was, and is, false.

"And if by grace; then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6). **Grace excludes human works**, including any rites, sacrifices, ceremonies, such as baptism or Mass, as a means of obtaining salvation or grace. Attempting to achieve merits and

salvation by any human means excludes the acceptance of God's grace.

"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Even though the law of Moses was the highest moral code ever given, and was given by God himself, anyone who attempted to merit salvation by obedience to that law automatically excluded himself from receiving and enjoying God's grace. This is exactly the position of every practising Roman Catholic today, who is sincerely trying, through the sacraments, and especially the Mass, to please God, to merit salvation, or even to worship Him. By relying even in part on human merit and traditions which are opposed to the Bible, he is excluding himself from all possibility of salvation by God's grace.

What, then are the conclusions to which we have come through the study of the Documents of the Vatican Council II, especially as relating to the Mass? And the tens of thousands of Roman Catholics, and non-Roman Catholics, who are part of the modern renewal of the use of the words "born again"?

1) Do not assume that because you think you are "born again", or others have told you that you are "born again" that this is necessarily true according to the Bible.

2) Do not assume that a positive emotional religious feeling, a mystical experience, the "commitment" of your life to Christ, or the acceptance of certain Christian doctrines as true, is sufficient to guarantee that you are truly "born again".

3) Read carefully Romans, chapters 3 through 5, and Hebrews, chapters 7 through 10, to understand the Biblical basis of salvation and acceptance with God. Is it a fact that the Roman priesthood and the Roman Mass are unnecessary and un-scriptural?

4) Recognize that anyone who understands God's Bible way of salvation can not be "born again" and at the same time continue in sincere attendance at Mass and other Roman sacraments.

There is nothing to be gained, and everything to be lost eternally, by trying to ignore or deny these simple facts. Many today believe that it is a demonstration of "love" to consider their moral, sincere, conscientious Roman Catholic friends and neighbours as "born again Christians", especially if these friends have had some sort of emotional religious experience, or if they affirm that they believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

To question the salvation of these loved ones may raise the cry of bigotry, narrow-mindedness, or sectarianism. But what of the results if these situations are never clarified, if you are unable, or afraid, to face the possibility that friends, so dearly loved, and who believe themselves to be saved, may really be eternally lost?

The words of Christ are an alarming, but loving warning, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied (spoken publicly) in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" (Matthew 7:22). These are professing Christians, who are not ashamed to stand up for Him, who have had miraculous answers to prayer, who have worked and sacrificed for Him. Undoubtedly, there are included many professing, practising, Roman Catholics, as well as many Protestants, Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists, and others.

Christ's chilling words continue, "And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (without true faith and obedience to Biblical truth)".

In other words, the only way to true salvation, to being truly "born again", is faith in what the Bible says about Christ and His offer of salvation to "whosoever believes on Him". And the proof of true salvation

is obedience to Scriptural teaching in every area of faith and practice.

Now that you have understood these truths, you may need to make important, difficult changes in your own life, or in your relations to others whom you love. But, God says in the Scriptures, the changes are literally a question of life and death.