

Christianity Is God Reaching People

To Establish Relationship, Not Religion

This letter is written in response to _____ 's letter of March 6 in Readers Write.

First of all, I have not seen the so-called anti-Catholic letter. I suppose it all depends on what side of the fence you are on. Are we to consider Jesus and the Apostles anti - Jewish because they preached to the Jews about God's sacrificial love, forgiveness, repentance from sin, reconciliation and eternal life? I think the prophet Jonah would be considered anti - Ninevite because he did not want to preach God's message of repentance and forgiveness to them. Jonah wanted God to destroy the Ninevites.

People who want to preach the gospel to Catholics want to see Catholics become true Christians just like when Apostle Paul preached to the Jews so that they would become true Jews circumcised of the heart instead of just circumcised of the flesh (Romans 2:28,29).

Likewise, a Catholic who is baptized is not truly born again unless he or she is circumcised of the heart by the Holy Spirit. This takes place only when an individual makes a personal commitment to trust Christ and follow Him (Acts 11:14-18; John 3:3-8; 7:37-39).

Secondly the tenets of the faith must be taught according to the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 states, "By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

The Scriptures in the book of Hebrews state, "**Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness**" (9:22). *The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the Mass is a bloodless sacrifice (CCC-1367). **The Scriptures in Hebrews 10:11-18 proclaim that Jesus' sacrifice was once for all.** *The Catholic Catechism proclaims that in the Mass, "the work of our redemption is carried on" (CCC-1406). **God's word in Hebrews testifies that the blessings of Christ's sacrifice belong to those who live by faith (10:26-39; 11:1-40; 12:1-3).****

The Catechism testifies that Jesus' offering on the Cross is united with the "Praises, sufferings, prayers and work" of the Catholic participants (CCC 1368-1370) and this united offering is given to God to take away sin (CCC 1368-1370, 1393).

The Catholic Church does not teach the Good News of Christ's sacrifice according to the scriptures. Isaiah 64:5-6 clearly says that all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. The Apostle Paul testifies in the book of Philippians 3:1-9 "Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ ... I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him ... the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

Another Point was the role faith and works play in our salvation and justification. Ephesians 2:8-10 reads "For by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are

God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

James' point in 2:14-18 was not that faith and works are both necessary for justification and salvation, but that if your so-called faith is not followed by good deeds then you probably have not really been saved. Your faith is useless if it is based on head knowledge and not on a true heartfelt faith in Christ's saving work. This idea is supported by James 2:19 which follows the passage and states, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder."

The Last Point was about God not hating religion and not hating at all. So I looked it up and found Isaiah 1:10-17, verses 13 and 14 read "Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable and your appointed feasts My soul hates."

One of the reasons God hated their religious practices was because they were becoming a harlot by co-mingling with the pagan religions around them. Isaiah wrote in 1:21 "See how the faithful city has become a harlot."

What do we see today? We see a focus on the similarities among religions and how each can achieve salvation through the dictates of their conscience. God hates religion because today it is defined as man's way of reaching God through faith and works.

Christianity is God reaching down to man through Jesus to establish a relationship not a religion. Jesus prayed to His Father in John 17:26 "That the love You have for Me may be in them and that I Myself may be in them." (See also Colossians 2:1-23).

The Scriptures also do not define hate as a petty human emotion. In Psalm 119:103, 104 we read, "How sweet are your promises to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path." (See Matthew 7:13, 14 and John 14:6).

Open your heart, soul and mind to the One True Savior Jesus.

(Matthew 22:37; John 8:31, 32)

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