

**A selection of letters published in the Belfast Telegraph
[2000] between 'Father' Patrick McCafferty and Cecil
Andrews of "Take Heed" Ministries**

Not regarded as second-class Christians [16th September]

Let W. Breen [writeback September 9] be reassured that in no way does the Catholic Church consider him or any Protestant to be a 'second-class Christian'. The Catholic Church, in its official teaching documents, recognises the presence and action of God's Holy Spirit in the life, worship and ministry of the other Christian Churches that are divided from us. The decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964 states 'It follows that the separated Churches and communities as such, though we believe them to be deficient in some respects, are by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Holy Spirit, does not decline to use them as means of salvation – means which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church'. What we can make no apology for to anyone is our firm belief that the fullness of revealed truth subsists in the Catholic Church, the Church that Jesus Christ founded and entrusted to Peter and his successors. God however will not condemn or refuse anyone who, unable to believe or accept this truth, lives his or her life as a faithful Christian in the Protestant or Reformed tradition. Let Mr Breen compare this teaching of the Catholic Church on other Christians with the attitude of those 'Protestant Evangelicals' who refuse to acknowledge that Catholics are Christians in any sense at all. - 'FATHER' PATRICK McCAFFERTY

**Pronouncement Endorses Vatican Two's Assertion [23rd
September]**

My friend Patrick McCafferty [writeback September 16] once more betrays the confused and contradictory teaching of the Roman Catholic Church where the question of the salvation of non-Roman Catholic professing Christians is concerned. He asserts that in no way does the Catholic Church consider any Protestant to be a second-class Christian. He goes on to state that '*God however will not condemn or refuse anyone who, unable to believe or accept this truth [the claim by Rome that she alone possesses the fullness of revealed Christian truth] lives his or her life as a faithful Christian in the Protestant or Reformed tradition*'. The reality is that Rome does identify Protestants as being second-class Christians and that would have been

clearly evident if Patrick had gone on to quote what Rome further stated in 1964 in *Vatican 2* regarding what they classed as '*separated Churches and communities*'. *Vatican 2* declared '*Nevertheless...our separated brethren...are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those to whom he has given new birth into one body...for it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone...that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained*'. If words are to mean anything, I ask a simple question. If someone does not have access to, or refuses to acknowledge Rome's claim to possession of '*the fullness of the means of salvation*' how can that person be classed by Mr McCafferty as 'Christian'? A Christian is a person who possesses God's "so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3) and, if not, then that person is not a Christian in any sense of the word. Mr McCafferty can only do it if he and his Church create an unscriptural 'second-class' Christian category and that is precisely what *Vatican 2* did and what the recently issued '*Dominus Iesus*' did by stating that '*these separated Churches and communities...suffer from defects*'. The root of this whole problem was clearly identified when Patrick wrote that '*the fullness of revealed truth subsists in the Catholic Church*'. Evangelical Christians like myself firmly reject this assertion and hold that the fullness of God's revealed truth today can be found alone in the Holy Scriptures and, in consequence we have been consistent in our assertion that in the light of the Scriptures alone, Roman Catholicism does not faithfully proclaim "the gospel of Christ [which] is the power of God unto salvation" [Romans 1:16] and Rome fails to meet the criteria of being part of the true Christian Church. God's glorious and trustworthy message to every true Christian is found in Colossians 2:10 "Ye are complete in Him" and that means Christ and not any single religious grouping, Roman Catholic or otherwise. – CECIL ANDREWS

Ecumenism must grasp thorny issues [30th September]

Further to recent correspondence in writeback and Steven King's article [September 21] I would point out that '*Dominus Iesus*' is a clear reiteration of Catholic teaching as formulated at the Second Vatican Council. The main purpose of this document is to address the problem for people today of relativism, whereby truth is rendered nebulous and reduced to a matter of opinion. Historically speaking Jesus Christ founded one Church which He entrusted to Peter's pastoral care as the pre-eminent apostle. He entrusted to that Church the deposit of revealed truth which is to be believed by men and women. Throughout Church history, this deposit of faith has been mined for its inestimable riches by pastors and teachers in communion with Peter's successors as the various Christian doctrines were defined. Although the Catholic Church does believe and teach that the fullness of revealed truth

subsists in her alone, she can exclude no one from the possibility of salvation. There is truth to be found in all religions but Christ alone is the source of that truth. Every human being who will be saved will be saved through Christ – even those who have never heard of Him – if they strive to live a life of love in the world. The limitless grace of Jesus Christ will make this possible (1 Timothy 4:10). It is true that all of us at present are seeing through a glass darkly (1 Corinthians 13:12). The Catholic Church of course, like all the other Churches has faults. One day in the presence of God in heaven, all the redeemed of every creed and culture will stand enraptured by the incomparable beauty of that absolute truth which is currently beyond all of us. That being said, Christ nevertheless has revealed a truth that can be known at present. The fullness of that truth, we believe, is to be found in the Catholic Church. Does this mean we also believe it harder or even impossible for our brothers and sisters in other Christian traditions and world religions to be saved? Absolutely not. As Father Gerry Reynolds wrote last week *‘God in Christ holds nothing against anyone’*. God will not turn anyone away and has no favourites. There are countless people like my friend Cecil Andrews [writeback September 23] and other correspondents who, for a multitude of reasons cannot accept that the Catholic Church is the Church that Christ founded. I, as a Catholic, have no advantage over them because at the end of the day even the fullness of faith without love is useless (1 Corinthians 13:2). Love will be the criterion of judgment and not doctrinal correctness. The fragmentation of the Christian family is painful and distressing. There are at present 26000 various denominations and sects. True ecumenism must grasp the thorny issues. If there is no pain, tension and even at times, anger in ecumenism then it is going nowhere and there will be no ultimate healing. Honest theological debate and sincere ecumenical dialogue in an atmosphere of mutual love and respect will help remove the sting of animosity from our broken and hurting relationships. There are many difficult problems and disagreements in doctrine. Everyone can’t be right. Cardinal Basil Hume once spoke of an ‘ecumenism of the heart’. We can experience already in this world a oneness in heart with all those who love and serve Jesus Christ and, indeed, with people of good will of all religions and none. Genuine Christian love is stronger than all the divisions that have come about in the Church through sin and human weakness. We must persevere together on our ecumenical journey and keep our eyes on the Kingdom where all wounds will be healed. – ‘FATHER’ PATRICK McCAFFERTY

It’s not dialogue ecumenists need [7th October]

In the spirit of genuine Christian love which “rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth” (1 Corinthians 13:6) I would respectfully point out that

my friend Patrick McCafferty's letter [writeback September 30] illustrates perfectly the great gulf that exists between the claimed Roman Catholic possession and stewardship of *'the fullness of revealed truth'* and the Evangelical Christian reliance on 'Scripture Alone' for revealed truth. Mr McCafferty wrote of this Roman Catholic *'deposit of faith [being] mined for its inestimable riches by pastors and teachers in communion with Peter's successors'*. He went on to quote favourably his fellow priest, Gerry Reynolds who apparently wrote *'God in Christ holds nothing against anyone'* and Patrick then added *'God will not turn anyone away and has no favourites'*. As an Evangelical Christian I read what Patrick and his colleague have written and I compare their statements to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ who said in Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven...many will say to me in that day Lord, Lord...And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity." When it comes to believing which one of these opposing viewpoints represents truth I believe what God Himself has clearly said in the Scriptures rather than what men claim to have unearthed. To continue Patrick's mining theme it seems to me that he and Gerry Reynolds should take heed to the warning that *'all that glitters is not gold'*. It is not dialogue that ecumenists need but rather a searching of and by the Spirit of God a submission to the authority and instruction of God's sole revealed truth for today, the Holy Scriptures. As the Psalmist wrote "The entrance of thy words giveth light. It giveth understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:130). – CECIL ANDREWS

Church produced Bible, not vice versa [14th October]

The Rev James Gordon's wise and thoughtful contribution [writeback October 7] reminds us that we do have many doctrines in common as Catholic and Protestant Christians. We all worship one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and when we stand before God in judgment we won't have to pass a theology exam (Matthew 25:31-41). Cecil Andrews and Ian Hutchinson [writeback October 7] point to reliance on 'Scripture Alone' for revealed truth. This doctrine however, known as 'Sola Scriptura' is not taught anywhere in the Bible, was unknown to the early Christians and did not exist prior to the 14th century. Those who adhere to this stance are also in danger of succumbing to what can only be described as 'bibliolatry'; the authority of Scripture does not exist apart from the teaching authority of the Church. Christ Himself tells us to submit to the authority of the Church (Matthew 18:15-18). Scripture itself testifies that the Church and not the Bible is the "pillar and ground of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15) and that in addition to the written word we are to accept oral tradition (1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15) The Church produced the Bible and not vice versa. The first Christians did not even have

a complete Bible and the Canon of Sacred Scripture was not settled until the 4th century at the Synod of Rome [382AD] and the Councils of Hippo [393AD] and Carthage [397AD]. Thus it was an extra-scriptural authority which identified the contents of the Bible itself. Cecil Andrews reminds us of Jesus' words "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the Kingdom". This is a warning that we all need to keep in mind. Jesus goes on to say this Kingdom belongs to those who do His Father's will. We will be invited to take possession of that Kingdom if we have lived a life of love on earth for "everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God" (1 John 4:7-8) - 'FATHER' PATRICK McCafferty

Tragedy is encouraging people to behave rightly but believe wrongly [4th November]

The whole thrust of my friend Patrick McCafferty's recent letters [writeback October 14 & 28] is to assert the Roman Catholic teaching that the scriptures are subject to the wisdom of a select group of men [namely The Magisterium headed up by the Pope]. This contrasts with the evangelical Christian view that all believers are subject alone to God's wisdom and authority as revealed in the scriptures. Patrick says '*the Church produced the Bible and not vice versa*' whereas the Bible says "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). The reality is that the Spirit of God authenticates and validates scripture and not mortal men. Patrick states that the teaching of Sola Scriptura was unknown prior to the 14th century yet the Apostle Paul himself taught believers "not to think of men above that which is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6). Paul commended the believers in Berea for not setting him and his teachings above the scriptures because they took the time to test his teachings by the scriptures (Acts 17:11). Even the first supposed Pope, Peter himself was checked out and challenged publicly by Paul (Galatians 2:11-14). Peter and Paul, even though inspired by God to write portions of scripture, nevertheless were themselves subject to and under the authority of scripture. Patrick's reference to submitting to the authority of the Church as cited in Matthew 18 refers to settling matters of dispute between believers in a local church situation and forms no basis for the Roman Catholic assertion of a universal ruling magisterium of pope and bishops having authority over the scriptures themselves. Patrick claims Church authority over the scriptures on the basis of 1 Timothy 3:15 "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth". This verse teaches that the Church should be the "pillar" [support] and "ground" [site] of "truth". The scriptures which according to the Lord Himself are "truth" (John 17:17) should be supported by and found in the Church but the supreme authority is "truth" [God's written word] and certainly not the fallible support and site [ie the Church] of "truth". Finally Patrick once

more asserts that *'we will be invited to take possession of the Kingdom if we have lived a life of love on earth'* and cites 1 John 4:7-8 in support. Yet again he wrongly asserts that "the fruit" of Christian conversion ["love"] will actually be the grounds on which we enter heaven. God's written word does not say that a life of "love" is the passport to Heaven but rather it says "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). The tragedy of Roman Catholicism is that it encourages people to behave rightly but to believe wrongly and this all stems from wrongly giving men authority over the scriptures. The scriptures most certainly are in opposition to much of Roman Catholic tradition. King David's testimony found in Psalm 119:10 still holds good for today "Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee". Evangelical Christians do not worship the word of God [*'Bibliolatry'* according to Patrick] but like David of old worship the One True God revealed in His inspired scriptures. – CECIL ANDREWS.