

Responding to articles (mostly pro Roman Catholic) sent anonymously to me and received 14th June 2011: (2): 'Is Robert Sungenis right on "being saved"?'

This article is my second response to the package of articles sent anonymously to me and received by me on 14th June 2011. My first response that dealt with the question –

'Does Christ's sacrifice continue?'

Is located on - http://www.takeheed.info/Assorted_Articles/Ecumenism/response-to-articles-part-one.pdf

Responding now to Article 2

This second response relates to an article sent to me, that was written by Mr Robert Sungenis, and is titled '**Wondering what one's response (as a Roman Catholic) ought to be to the question: "Have you been saved"?**'

It is located on <http://www.americancatholiclawyers.org/questions.htm> and currently is the second question listed. Herewith is the text of the answer given -

I assume this question is asked because of the way evangelistic Protestants commonly approach Catholics about the matter of salvation. **Protestants of the Calvinistic and Fundamentalist variety have been taught that once someone receives salvation by "accepting Jesus into your heart," that individual can never lose his salvation, regardless of whether he falls into sin.** If he falls into deep sin, the Calvinist apologetic is that the person was never "really" saved originally, so he has no salvation to lose. If the person sins but not seriously, he is said to "fall out of fellowship" with Christ, but he maintains his salvation.

Thus, when these individuals approach a Catholic and ask: "have you been saved?" or "if you died tonight, do you have the assurance that you will go to heaven?" or "have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?" behind the question is the above theology concerning eternal security.

Since most of Protestantism (except for Lutherans and Anglicans) believe that salvation is received through one's "acceptance by faith of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior," they will automatically discount one's appeal to sacraments as providing the means of salvation. Thus, anyone who has not followed the regimen of the above "profession" wherein one "believes in his heart and confesses with his mouth" (cf., Romans 10:9), then the Protestant will not consider that person "saved." **The salvation experience for the Protestant is based primarily on the subjective disposition of the heart and subsequently on a personal confession of that faith in public.**

Unfortunately for them, the Protestants have misconstrued the biblical teaching on how one receives salvation. **To the question "Have you been saved," the Catholic who has received the sacrament of Baptism can answer: "Yes, I have been saved. I received my salvation when I was Baptized by water and the spirit, as Jesus taught in John 3:5.** Jesus says that without receiving the water one cannot see the kingdom of heaven, and thus we see that Baptism is an absolute requirement for salvation. This comes not only from the Bible, but from the authority of the Church who has made this teaching into dogma (Council of Orange in 529; Council of Trent in 1563), and among all the Fathers of the Church who gave their unanimous consent to this teaching, without one deviation."

The Catholic can further answer: "Baptism gives me an objective means of knowing that I am saved, as opposed to dependence on one's mere subjective disposition of faith taught in Protestant churches. In fact, when you ask me 'have you been saved?' I can tell you the exact time and place that I received salvation, since God promised that he would justify me when I, by faith, received the sacrament of Baptism. You, on the other hand, must depend on your subjective feelings of faith, feelings that may or may not be real, and feelings that do not have an objective counterpart. **In Catholicism, we have the objective means of salvation (Baptism) coinciding with the subjective disposition of the individual (an act of faith and profession of that faith during the Baptismal act). Both are required for the procurement of salvation. I as a Catholic have done both, and therefore I am saved."**

The Catholic can add the following: "Having been saved, however, does not mean that I am guaranteed to go to heaven, since the same Bible that taught me about Baptism in John 3:5 is the same one that teaches me I can lose my salvation if I sin seriously without repentance (e.g., Luke 8:13; John 15:6; Romans 8:12-13; 1Cor 6:8-9; Gal 5:19-21; 2Tim 2:12; Hebrews 2:1; 3:1,6, 12-14; 4:1, 11-14; 6:4-6, 11-12; 10:26-27, 35-38; 12:1,3, 14-17, 25, 29; James 2:13-14; 4:4; 2Pet 2:20-22, et al). Hence, if I see you in serious sin without repentance, I should ask you: 'have you received salvation?'"

Of course, the above truth about losing one's salvation cuts both ways. Since the average Catholic is nominal and often living in sin against the edicts of the Church, and hasn't been practicing the faith or receiving the sacraments, the question "have you been saved?" is quite appropriate. **Many "Catholics" have, indeed, lost their salvation**, and thus the answer to the above question, if answered honestly, would have to be "I received it when I was Baptized but have since lost it due to my own sin."

What the Catholic needs to do at this point, of course, is make his way back into the Church and receive the sacrament of Confession in order to restore the graces he once had received at Baptism. Unfortunately, it is exactly at this point that the average Catholic becomes fodder for the Protestant, since the latter will try to convince the former that he need not confess his sins to a priest because priest's have no power to forgive sins (in direct violation of John 20:23 and Matt 16:18-19). He will then convince the Catholic that the reception of salvation is much simpler than going to a priest. The "rugged individualism" he inherited from his Protestant forefathers will force him to say, "Why not go to God

directly and make a confession with your mouth and receive Jesus into your heart?"

This, of course, gets right back to the problem we introduced concerning the objective versus subjective nature of salvation. **If the Catholic really wants to obey God, then he will use the means God has ordained to have his sins forgiven. If they are serious sins, the God-ordained means is the sacrament of confession. Anything else is an affront to God and a device of the devil** (who disguises himself as an angel of light - 2 Cor 11:14-15).

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Author of: Not By Faith Alone: The Biblical Evidence for the Catholic Doctrine of Justification (Queenship Publishing, 1997, 774 pages)
08-19-05

First of all – who is Robert Sungenis? Well, he is someone that I have actually met ‘in the flesh’. Way back, in my September 1998 News from the Front newsletter, I stated ‘**I have been invited to take part in a 2-evening debate in Fresno, California on the subjects of 'Sola Scriptura' and 'The Papacy' and I will (DV) be partnering Rob Zins against 2 Roman Catholic apologists**’. Well, the 2 Roman Catholic apologists were Scott Butler and Robert Sungenis.

Both Scott Butler and Robert Sungenis were two of a number of supposed ‘Evangelicals’ who in the 1990’s converted to, or as in the case of Sungenis, returned to Roman Catholicism. Interesting biographical information about Mr Sungenis can be found on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Sungenis and as you will read he certainly has some ‘strange’ and very controversial opinions.

In My December 1998 News from the Front newsletter I gave a brief report on those debates under the heading ‘**Few at Fresno**’ – that report is located on <http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-december-1998/>

When the debates were over both Mr Butler and Mr Sungenis gave, me copies of books they had had published. In the case of Scott Butler it was a book that he had co-authored with others called ‘**Jesus, Peter & The Keys: A Scriptural Handbook on the Papacy**’. For anyone interested there is a critique of this book by Evangelical apologist, James White of Alpha & Omega Ministries located on <http://vintage.aomin.org/SBNDDHrep.html>

In the case of Mr Sungenis the books were ‘**Not by Faith Alone: The Biblical Evidence for the Catholic Doctrine of Justification**’ and ‘**Not by Scripture Alone: A Catholic Critique of the Protestant Doctrine of Sola Scriptura**’.

It is often helpful in trying to gauge where an author stands ‘doctrinally’ by looking at those who are willing to associate themselves with his writings either by way of an endorsement or by perhaps writing a foreword for the book in question.

In the case of Scott Butler’s book ‘**Jesus, Peter & The Keys: A Scriptural Handbook on the Papacy**’ – the foreword is by ‘Father’ Mitchell Pacwa and there is an endorsement on the back cover by Scott Hahn. ‘Father’ Pacwa is in fact an ‘SJ’ – a Jesuit – and many years ago he was a welcome contributor to the magazine issued by the Christian Research Institute founded by

the late Dr Walter Martin. Whilst Dr Martin may have produced many helpful materials on readily identifiable cults he strangely shied away from the doctrinal problems associated with Roman Catholicism as did his successor Hank Hanegraaff.

There is a very helpful article on this located on <http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/Wolves/cr1.htm> and as you will read Scott Hahn also gets a mention. My wife Margaret and I did go to hear Scott Hahn when he visited Northern Ireland back in August 1996 and my report of that meeting under the heading '**Scott Hahn – a dangerous man**' is located on <http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-december-1996/> - the article is towards the end of the newsletter found on that link.

In the case of '**Not by Faith Alone: The Biblical Evidence for the Catholic Doctrine of Justification**' by Mr Sungenis, the foreword is by Scott Hahn and when it comes to his book '**Not by Scripture Alone: A Catholic Critique of the Protestant Doctrine of *Sola Scriptura***' the foreword is by Peter Kreeft.

I have already given links to items on Mr Hahn but what about Peter Kreeft? Peter Kreeft, another supposed Evangelical who converted to Rome, in 1996 wrote and published a book called '**Ecumenical Jihad**'. It had an endorsement on the back cover by Chuck Colson that read '*Peter Kreeft is one of the premier apologists in America today.../ Kreeft is one of our most valiant intellectual warriors*'. Also on the back cover were these words from J I Packer '*With entertaining insight Kreeft looks into the attitudes, alliances and strategies that today's state of affairs requires of believers. Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox alike need to ponder Kreeft's vision of things – preferably in discussion together*'.

These are just a few quotes from Kreeft's book – '**When I think how much my Protestant brothers and sisters are missing in not having Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist... I at first feel a terrible gap between myself and them. What a tremendous thing they are missing! ... We worship the Eucharist because it is Christ... The power that will reunite the Church and win the world is Eucharistic adoration**'.

When you read these few quotes and then consider the favourable endorsement by Messrs Colson and Packer it's no wonder I made reference to these endorsements when writing about both of them in my article 'Who are the "ravening wolves" of Matthew 7:15?' located on <http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-june-1999/>

On this link <http://www.cwrc-rz.org/zins/theological/101-a-review-of-peter-kreefts-ecumenical-jihad.html> you can also read a review by Rob Zins of '**Ecumenical Jihad**'.

Returning now to the article sent to me, I want to comment upon the portions that I have highlighted in red and to address the relevant portion of the heading to my article namely '**Is Robert Sungenis right on "being saved?"**'

I believe that in the first two portions that I have highlighted Mr Sungenis has created what I would call 'a straw man'. He has basically put forward what he believes is the accepted Evangelical position on 'being saved' and he then proceeds to demolish it in the light of Roman Catholic 'truth'. He wrote - **Protestants of the Calvinistic and Fundamentalist variety have been taught that... someone receives salvation by "accepting Jesus into your heart,"... The salvation experience for the Protestant is**

based primarily on the subjective disposition of the heart and subsequently on a personal confession of that faith in public.

Before I deal with his counter argument to what he has stated let me say that he is wrong in his assessment of what he refers to as the 'Calvinistic and Fundamentalist' view of 'salvation'. Within the Evangelical groupings he has referred to there are differing positions on the subject of 'salvation' – some do subscribe to the line encouraging people to 'exercise faith' by "accepting Jesus into your heart" position but others, like myself, reject that position.

In an article on [http://www.takeheed.info/Assorted Articles/Ecumenism/sowing-and-sleeping.pdf](http://www.takeheed.info/Assorted%20Articles/Ecumenism/sowing-and-sleeping.pdf) I wrote about a 'crusade' that was held in Belfast in April 2008 by Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham. Franklin Graham, like his father before him, would certainly be found in the camp of those who subscribe to the 'exercising faith' and "accepting Jesus into your heart" position. In the article, I quoted from a little booklet called '**Decisional Regeneration**' by James E Adams – this is part of what I quoted from the booklet –

'In the nineteenth century few controversies were so heated as the one over Baptismal Regeneration...Baptismal Regeneration teaches that the "new birth" is conveyed by the waters of baptism. The sacrament is performed by man and is in his control. But the twentieth [and now 21st] century Church has in "DECISIONAL REGENERATION" a more subtle falsehood to combat. "Decisional Regeneration" differs from Baptismal Regeneration only in the fact that it attaches the certainty of the "new birth" to a different act. This doctrine, just as Baptismal Regeneration, sees the "new birth" as the result of a mechanical process that can be performed by man..."Decisional Regeneration"... prescribes a counselling procedure...There are many variations of this type of counselling, but they all have in common a mechanical element such as the repeating of a prayer or signing of a card upon the performance of which the individual is assured of his/her salvation...

This Evangelical practice or methodology was labelled by Mr Adams as being the equivalent of 'Decisional Regeneration' and I myself refer to it later in this article as being like an 'Evangelical Sacrament of Decisionism'.

In a totally unrelated article that I wrote on C S Lewis and that is located on <http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-december-2003/> I also wrote the following portion that, as it turns out, is relevant to this matter of someone being exhorted to 'exercise faith' etc in order to 'be saved' –

I often hear unregenerate people being urged to '**exercise faith**' – but what is '**faith**'? Well, we find the answer in **Hebrews 11:1** "**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen**". This is something a "**natural** [unregenerate] **man**" [**1 Corinthians 2:14**] does not possess [and therefore cannot '**exercise**'] because such understanding and assurance comes only through the work of "**The Holy Spirit**" [**1 Corinthians 2:14**] who must FIRST '**quicken**' [regenerate] the sinner who is "**dead in trespasses and sins**" [**Ephesians 2:1**]. [Tom Wells in his book '**Faith – The Gift of God**' wrote "**A man must be born again in order to exercise faith...Repentance and faith do not cause the new birth. Far from it! The new birth causes repentance and faith...God makes a new man who delights in exercising faith towards God...Yet the faith is from God, a gift pure and simple...To God be the glory!! P58-60**]

Lazarus could not '**exercise faith**' to initiate his '**coming forth**' from the tomb [see **John 11:17-44**] – he first had to be '**quicken**' [regenerated] by the voice of God [Lazarus' – see **John 11:43**] and when the Lord called him by name he was '**reborn**' and so could "**come forth**" but He FIRST had to be brought to life by God and it is exactly the same in the matter of

'spiritual regeneration' [**"for the glory of God"** John 11:4]. Let me at this point say that if anyone promotes teaching on **REGENERATION** that is in conflict with what has already been biblically shown, in the earlier part of this article, to be the truth on this matter of **REGENERATION**, if they accommodate in their thinking the necessity for some input by sinful man, such as in the form of a conscious decision coupled with religious ritual, then I believe they are promoting a **'false gospel'** and such a **'gospel'** was anathematised by Paul in **Galatians chapter 1**. There, Paul, under inspiration, rejected the false teaching of a human decision to submit to 'ritualistic' circumcision as being necessary for salvation - **"And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved"** [Acts 15:1].

This cave-in to a **'false gospel'** by the Judaisers was mirrored in a similar 'sell-out' committed by so-called **'Evangelicals'** back in 1994 when they signed their agreement to the **'Evangelicals and Catholics Together Agreement'** – an agreement that in effect sanctioned 2 ways in which people could become Christians. One was the biblical and true way as outlined in **Vines' Expository Dictionary** –

[**'Palingenesia** "new birth" (*palin* – "again"; *genesis* – "birth") is used of "spiritual regeneration" [Titus 3:5] involving the communication of A NEW LIFE, the two operating powers to produce which are "The Word of Truth" [James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23] and "The Holy Spirit" [John 3:5-6]...The NEW BIRTH and REGENERATION do not represent successive stages in spiritual experience, they refer to the same event but view it in different aspects. The NEW BIRTH stresses the communication of spiritual life in contrast to the antecedent spiritual death; [see Ephesians 2:1] REGENERATION stresses the inception of a new state of things in contrast with the old' [see 2 Corinthians 5:17].]

but the second was the false 'ritualistic' way as captured by these words from the agreement – **'Those converted, whether understood...as having experienced the reawakening of the new birth originally bestowed in the sacrament of baptism'** – this was a statement that **Charles Colson, Bill Bright, J I Packer** and other **'Evangelicals'** had no difficulty in publicly endorsing – what a betrayal of divine truth!

Returning now to Mr Sungenis and to his counter to the 'exercising faith' by "accepting Jesus into your heart" position he wrote - **To the question "Have you been saved," the Catholic who has received the sacrament of Baptism can answer: "Yes, I have been saved. I received my salvation when I was Baptized by water and the spirit, as Jesus taught in John 3:5... In Catholicism, we have the objective means of salvation (Baptism) coinciding with the subjective disposition of the individual (an act of faith and profession of that faith during the Baptismal act). Both are required for the procurement of salvation. I as a Catholic have done both, and therefore I am saved.** In the 1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraphs 1253-1255 address this matter of **'Faith and Baptism'**.

Here Mr Sungenis advocates the Roman Catholic Sacrament of Baptism coupled with 'faith' to produce regeneration and claims this is the truth where salvation is concerned rather than the error of what he has basically outlined as an 'Evangelical Sacrament of Decisionism' coupled with 'faith' to produce regeneration – both are equally soul-damningly wrong.

The following extract from a short article located on <http://www.worldviewweekend.com/worldview-times/article.php?articleid=7285> and published

on the very day I started to write this article outlines the harrowing results of such methodology in just one large Evangelical denomination –

"We've got ten million southern Baptists who walked somebody's aisle, and prayed somebody's prayer and checked somebody's card and raised their hand....we've got ten million of them that do not come to church. And when they face Jesus one day, at the Judgement bar, they're going to quote some preacher.....'Well, Pastor said if I'd come to the front...I did that. Pastor said if I prayed that prayer....I did that.' Do you not realize that if you give the flesh a hoop to jump, the flesh will do it every time? But one thing the flesh cannot do is cause your spirit to be born again." - Jeff Noblit, *The Spirit of God at Work in God's Church*

On this link <http://www.worldviewweekend.com/worldview-times/article.php?articleid=7283> you can also see and hear Pastor Noblit say these words in his sermon of 5th June 2011 – if you watch from 41 minutes onward to at least 59 minutes [**but it's worth persevering further even to the end at around 79 minutes**] you will hear some very honest and necessary preaching for today's professing church.

Is 'baptism' carried out 'in faith' really the door to 'being saved' FOR THE FIRST TIME (as you will have read, according to Mr Sungenis, 'many Catholics have lost the salvation "that was 'procured" through being baptised') as Robert Sungenis claims? When I read this article by Mr Sungenis it reminded me very much of a response I wrote some years ago to an article penned by 'Father' Patrick McCafferty called "Catholic and Christian" in which he claimed that as Catholics they, like many Evangelicals, can say – 'I have been saved', 'I am being saved' and 'I will be saved'.

Like Robert Sungenis, Patrick pointed to the various Roman Catholic Sacraments, like those of Baptism and one that is variously labelled in the Catholic Catechism as Conversion/Penance/Confession/Forgiveness/Reconciliation, as the grounds for a Catholic saying 'I have been saved' and 'I am being saved'. In response to his baptismal claims, in my article on <http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-march-2003/> I wrote the following

The answer to the question posed by the title of Patrick McCafferty's feature '**Catholic and Christian**'? is a resounding '**No**'! To understand why, we need go no further than to simply examine Patrick's answer when he was asked if he understood the reasons for opposition to the Catholic Church - Patrick answered –

"A lot of it is they don't understand the Catholic faith. When people begin to talk there's a realization that the differences are not as deep as they thought. Our own approach is that we have been saved by Jesus' death on the Cross, we are being saved by living the Christian life and we will be saved in the future".

When Patrick refers to Roman Catholics claiming '**we have been saved by Jesus' death on the cross**' Patrick has in mind what Rome teaches to be the effects of their sacrament of baptism. In the 1994 ***Catechism of the Catholic Church*** we read the following in **paragraph 1213** '**Through baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission**'. Later in **paragraph 1992** we read the following '**Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ who offered himself on the cross...Justification is conferred in baptism, the sacrament of faith**'.

So, when Patrick speaks of Roman Catholics '**having been saved**' he is referring to their baptism when they were for the first time '**justified**'. Rome teaches that '**justification**' is a process that begins in baptism and which then continues on the basis of co-operation between a 'grace-aided' sinner and his 'god'. According to Rome, '**justification**' can be lost, preserved and even increased. Hence, Rome

has in effect a series of **'justifications'**, subsequent to initial baptismal **'justification'** and ongoing throughout the life of her adherents.

Rome does not believe that the ungodly are **'justified'** through faith alone. Because of this, **'justification'** in Rome is never a permanently possessed certainty. If anyone should presume to think that they are assuredly and permanently **'justified'** through faith alone then Rome places them under the following anathema [*'curse'*] of God.

'If anyone saith that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified because that he assuredly believes himself absolved and justified, or, that no one is truly justified but he who believes himself justified: and that, by this faith alone, absolution and justification are effected, let him be anathema' [Council of Trent; Session 6 - Justification; Canon XIV].

In a more recent Roman Catholic publication, Roman Catholic professor of theology, **Alan Schreck** [Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio] in his book **'Catholic and Christian'** wrote on page 33 –

'The Catholic Church has always taught that no one can know with absolute certainty in this life whether he or she will be saved...It [The Catholic Church] maintains that we should not presume to know ahead of time that we will persevere in faith until the end'.

So, when Patrick states that Roman **Catholics 'have been saved by Jesus' death on the cross'** Patrick has in mind their initial baptismal **'justification'**.

How then can we answer Patrick's claims for 'baptismal regeneration' that mirror the claims made by Mr Sungenis? Let me direct you to a number of helpful articles that reveal the truth of God's Word on this matter.

Firstly there is an article by my close friend, Rob Zins, called **'Real Baptism'** located on <http://www.cwrc-rz.org/zins/apologetic-zone/real-baptism.html>

A further helpful article by Rob, looking at the Roman Sacraments in general, is located on <http://www.cwrc-rz.org/zins/theological/97-sacramentum-absurdum.html>

Finally, another article that may prove helpful is by Matt Slick of CARM and is located on <http://carm.org/is-baptism-necessary-salvation>

Turning now to the 'I am being saved' issue Mr Sungenis wrote - **The Catholic can add the following: "Having been saved, however, does not mean that I am guaranteed to go to heaven, since the same Bible that taught me about Baptism in John 3:5 is the same one that teaches me I can lose my salvation... Many "Catholics" have, indeed, lost their salvation... What the Catholic needs to do at this point, of course, is make his way back into the Church and receive the sacrament of Confession in order to restore the graces he once had received at Baptism... If the Catholic really wants to obey God, then he will use the means God has ordained to have his sins forgiven. If they are serious sins, the God-ordained means is the sacrament of confession. Anything else is an affront to God and a device of the devil"**

Shortly I will turn my attention to the matters of 'Priestly absolution' and then 'losing salvation' but at this point I want to quote from my response article to Patrick McCafferty on the issue of 'I am being saved'. In my article responding to Patrick's claims I wrote the following –

Then when Patrick says of Roman Catholics - **'we are being saved by living the Christian life'** - what he has in mind is this idea of being 'justified' over and over again – the series of **'justifications'** that I referred to earlier. This is achieved through adherence to the Roman sacramental system. **'Justification'** is a fragile condition that, according to Rome, can be lost because of what they term **'grave sin'**. The teaching of this loss of and subsequent restoration of **'justification'** is captured well in **paragraph 1446 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church**, which states

'Christ instituted the sacrament of penance for all sinful members of his Church, above all for those who, since baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification'.

Roman Catholics who recover their **'justification'** can, according to Rome, preserve and increase their **'justification'** through **'good works'**. Any belief to the contrary places one under the curse of the Roman Catholic religion.

'If anyone saith that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works, but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof, let him be anathema' [Council of Trent; Session 6 - Justification; Canon XXIV].

So, when Patrick speaks of Roman Catholics **'being saved by living the Christian life'** what he has in mind is their co-operation with God through adherence to the Roman Catholic sacramental system [the perseverance **'in faith'** referred to by **Alan Schreck** that I quoted earlier] coupled with what Rome refers to as **'good works'**.

Turning now to 'Priestly absolution' Mr Sungenis wrote - **If the Catholic really wants to obey God, then he will use the means God has ordained to have his sins forgiven. If they are serious sins, the God-ordained means is the sacrament of confession. Anything else is an affront to God and a device of the devil**

The first thing to notice is that Mr Sungenis, in line with Catholic teaching, classifies sins as being 'serious' and, although not mentioned, there must therefore be in consequence a category of 'not so serious'.

On this link http://www.takeheed.info/Assorted_Articles/Ecumenism/unpublished-belfast-telegraph-letter.pdf you will see details of some letter exchanges that I had via the Belfast Telegraph with 'Father' Patrick McCafferty and another Catholic man called John Morgan and this question of the forgiveness of sins is looked at – for the sake of brevity in this article I will just quote some extracts that are relevant to the **sacrament of confession** mentioned by Mr Sungenis –

Extract from letter by Cecil published 11 August 2001

When it comes, according to Roman Catholic teaching, to the more serious category of sin namely 'mortal sin' [there is no biblical basis for categorising sins as either 'venial' or 'mortal' - God's Word declares that any sin is 'mortal' - see Romans 6:23] prayer for forgiveness is not permitted to be made **'looking at God face-to-face and engaging with Him heart-to-heart'**. Instead the Roman Catholic seeking forgiveness must ask an ordained Roman Catholic priest for such forgiveness. The 1994 Catholic Catechism in paragraphs 1456 & 1448 states - **'Confession**

to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of Penance. All mortal sins...must be recounted by them in confession. The Church...through the bishop and his priests forgives sins in the name of Jesus Christ and determines the manner of satisfaction'.

This teaching of 'satisfaction' is a denial of the sufficiency of Christ's work alone at Calvary to obtain full forgiveness for His people.

Extract from letter by 'Father' McCafferty published 18 August 2001

Mr Andrews says there is no biblical basis for categorising sins as venial and mortal. He is wrong. **"Every kind of wrongdoing is sin, but not all sin is deadly (mortal)"**- read 1 John 5:16-17. The priest, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, is the minister of Christ's forgiveness. It is Jesus who forgives sin and not the priest. Jesus alone has authority to do so, as He told the scribes when He cured the paralytic. (Mark 2:6-12). His Father gave Him that authority and Jesus, when He was about to return to the Father, said to His apostles: **"as the Father sent Me so am I sending you...those whose sins you forgive they are forgiven"** (John 20:21-23). Therefore, Jesus, our great High Priest, shares His saving ministry of forgiveness and reconciliation with those whom He chooses and calls.

Extract from letter by Cecil that was not published

Patrick's reference to 1 John 5:15-16 must be taken in its full context by going back to verse 12 where John identifies believers [brothers] as those who have the Son and life [eternal]. A believing brother sadly can sin even to the point where the human punishment for his sin is the death penalty - a 'sin unto death'. A lesser sin committed by a believing brother may not qualify for capital punishment - this is a 'sin not unto death'.

John instructs believers how to pray in such cases [verses 14-16]. Rome's teaching that the 'sin unto death' [mortal] relates to God's eternal punishment of such in hell and that the 'sin not unto death' [venial] qualifies for a lesser punishment [a time of cleansing in purgatory] is not found in these verses and contradicts God's clear teaching on sin and its divine punishment. God's judgment upon sin is 'death' - see Ezekiel 18:4 & Romans 6:23 and any sin [whether great or small in human understanding] brings down that same judgment- see James 2:10.

All people when born are spiritually 'dead' - see Ephesians 2:1 and will in due time suffer physical 'death' which involves separation of the body from the spirit/soul. Why are people spiritually 'dead' and subject to physical death? - because of 'sin' - see Romans 5:12 and everyone is subject to it because of Adam's sin. A second 'death' [following resurrection] involves eternal separation from the blessing of God and will be visited on the Day of Judgment [Hebrews 9:27 & Revelation 20:11-15] upon all those not truly 'born again' who have in consequence died 'in their sins' irrespective of any categorisation [John 8:21].

God's forgiveness of sin can only be given by God - see Psalm 32:5 & Mark 2:7. The Christian church and its members can preach that such forgiveness is available from God through faith

alone in Christ alone - see Acts 13:38-39. The Church and its members have no authority to actually dispense God's forgiveness so Patrick's claims for such power as cited in paragraphs 1448 and 1495 of the 1994 Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church are without scriptural foundation.

In my article <http://www.takeheed.info/the-gospel-truth-according-to-father-paul-symonds/> where I examine the teachings of Jesuit-trained Priest, Paul Symonds I look at various segments of video in which he speaks. In my analysis of Segments 3 & 4 I wrote –

Paul Symonds likened the Roman Catholic priestly call to those who were called to the Old Testament Aaronic priesthood. That priesthood was made forever redundant by the finished work of Christ on the cross. We read in Hebrews 10:11-12 & 14 “**And every [Aaronic] priest standeth daily ministering and offering the same sacrifices** [just like Roman Catholic priests do today by offering daily ‘The Sacrifice of The Mass’] **which can never take away sins; But this man [Christ] after he had offered one sacrifice for sins [on the cross] for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...For by one offering he hath perfected** [given a perfect standing before God to] **them that are sanctified**’ [those truly converted and now set apart for God –all true believers].

In speaking of the Roman priesthood’s claim to forgive sins Paul Symonds spoke of their ‘*power and responsibility to release people from their sins*’ and of course that supposedly happens during ‘*confession*’. Former Roman Catholic, Jim McCarthy in his book ‘The Gospel According to Rome’ has some helpful comments on this claim. He wrote on pages 80-81 –

‘When King David repented of his adultery, he confessed his sin *directly to God*. No priest. No ritual. No sacrament. Just a broken man owning up to his sin before His maker...Confession *directly to God* was also the experience of Nehemiah [1:4-11], Daniel [9:3-19] and Ezra [9:5-10]. New Testament Christians can also go directly to God with their sins ...’If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” [1 John 1:9]. Jim also wrote on these pages that Christians ‘go not to a Judge but to their Father with Jesus at their side [for] “If anyone sins we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” [1 John 2:1-2]’.

Paul Symonds quoted John 20:22-23 to substantiate this claim that priests have the power to forgive sins in Christ’s name – “**Receive ye the Holy Spirit; Whosoever’s sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them and whosoever’s sins ye retain, they are retained**”. In understanding scripture it is always necessary to consider all relevant verses on a particular topic and these verses must be understood in the light of for instance Luke 24:45-47 “**Then opened he [Christ] their understanding that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem**”.

In Antioch we read of Paul saying in Acts 13:38 “**Be it known unto you therefore men and brethren that through this man [Christ] is preached unto you the**

forgiveness of sins". Earlier I also quoted Paul when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:21 **"For it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching [not priestly-orchestrated sacramental observance] to save them that believe"**.

Returning to Jim McCarthy's book 'The Gospel According to Rome' we read on page 82

'The disciples were to go forth and proclaim the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ...This is the very thing we find the disciples doing in the book of Acts. Peter for example proclaimed Christ to Cornelius saying, "...whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins"...There were also occasions when the disciples found it necessary to proclaim the sins of some retained. Simon the magician was one such person. Simon heard the gospel said he believed and was baptised. Shortly afterward he revealed his true motive. He thought he could obtain magical powers from the apostles. Peter told Simon he was still in his sins [Acts 8:21-22]'.

Perhaps I could add to this by saying that Peter didn't then tell Simon to seek out some priest to whom he should confess his sins in order to obtain God's forgiveness. Peter said to Simon "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and **pray God** if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" [Acts 8:22].

One of the earliest joys in my Christian life was to meet former Roman Catholic priest, Bart Brewer, at a conference in London – Bart went to be with the Lord in 2005 and this link will take you to a short tribute that I penned in memory of Bart <http://www.takeheed.info/tribute-to-bart-brewer/>

In his book 'Pilgrimage from Rome, Bart wrote about his experiences of 'taking confession' during his time as a Roman Catholic priest. On page 55 he wrote

'Although my first experience of taking confession had been harsh and disturbing, I soon adjusted, although I never liked the duty'.

Quoting then from the Council of Trent [Session 14: Chapter III], Bart wrote

'Canon VI: "If anyone denies that sacramental confession was instituted by divine law or is necessary to salvation; or says that the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, which the Catholic Church has always observed from the beginning and still observes, is at variance with the institution and command of Christ and is a human contrivance, let him be anathema"' [Cecil's comments – according to this if you don't accept Rome's teaching on confessing sins to their priests you cannot be saved and you are under the curse of God!].

Bart continued,

'This canon is a classic example of the misuse of scripture. Confession to a priest, secretly or openly was not commanded or ordained by Christ. Nowhere does the Bible say that such confession is necessary for salvation. The confessional is a mere invention of men...It is the privilege of every sinner, whoever he may be, to confess his sins directly to God'.

This last truth was denied by the late Pope John Paul II during one of his trips to America when according to this report in the Los Angeles Times [12 December 1984] we

read, 'Rebutting a belief widely shared by Protestants and a growing number of Roman Catholics, Pope John Paul II on Tuesday dismissed the "widespread idea that one can obtain forgiveness directly from God" and exhorted Catholics to confess more often to their priests'

This quote can be viewed on this rather lengthy link –

[http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes/access/675039382.html?dids=675039382:675039382&FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:AI&type=historic&date=Dec+12%2C+1984&author=DON+A+SCHA NCHE&pub=Los+Angeles+Times+\(1886-Current+File\)&edition=&startpage=B11&desc=No+Forgiveness+%27Directly+From+God%2C%27+Pope+Says](http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes/access/675039382.html?dids=675039382:675039382&FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:AI&type=historic&date=Dec+12%2C+1984&author=DON+A+SCHA NCHE&pub=Los+Angeles+Times+(1886-Current+File)&edition=&startpage=B11&desc=No+Forgiveness+%27Directly+From+God%2C%27+Pope+Says)

Summing up his views on the 'confessional' Bart Brewer wrote [pages 56-57]

'Why does the church hold to the confessional as such an important part of its dogma? The chief reason is that obligatory confession keeps Catholics in submission...The confessional, linked as it is to penances and purgatory, is a yoke of bondage to Catholics, not only in this life, but even beyond the grave, as masses and prayers for the dead are said'.

The final words of that quotation from Bart Brewer will bring me rather nicely to the subject of the next segment on the DVD but before that let me direct your thoughts to the words of a former Jesuit priest called Jose Rico.

Earlier in this section I quoted from Hebrews 10. The book 'Far from Rome: Near to God' chronicles the testimonies of 50 converted, former Roman Catholic priests, and on pages 104-105, in the testimony of former Jesuit, Jose Rico, we read this

'When I finished studying the Epistle to the Hebrews I felt that an invisible and omnipotent hand stripped me of my vestments and my priestly character. The only priesthood found was that recorded by St Peter "*Ye also, as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*" [1Peter 2:5]. It is the same [priesthood] that is referred to in Hebrews "*By him therefore let us offer sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name*" [Hebrews 13:15]...Christ became my "only" Saviour for none other had died on the cross for me. He also became my "sufficient saviour" because His blood is all-powerful to wash my sins from my soul. How miserably the rites and ceremonies, the human traditions of Romanism, had failed to cleanse the soul for God...From that moment I knew myself as a new creature in Christ Jesus [2 Corinthians 5:17]...Yes, I had "*passed from death unto life*" [John 5:24] ...In this manner the curtain fell that put an end to the tragedy that had existed throughout my nineteen long years [as a Jesuit] in the priesthood'.

Finally I want to turn to the claims by Mr Sungenis about 'losing salvation' – he wrote **Protestants of the Calvinistic and Fundamentalist variety have been taught that once someone receives salvation by "accepting Jesus into your heart," that individual can never lose his salvation, regardless of whether he falls into sin... The Catholic can add the following: "Having been saved, however, does not mean that I am guaranteed to go to heaven, since the same Bible that taught me about Baptism in John 3:5 is the same one that teaches me I can lose my salvation**

Can someone who has been truly “born again” by the Spirit of God and not by the application of any waters of baptism lose the salvation received at their moment of true regeneration? My answer based upon what the Word of God teaches is an emphatic and glorious ‘No’. Easy to say but can I justify it from the Word of God?

On this link <http://www.freechurch.org/resources/sermons/salvation.htm> you can read a wonderful sermon preached by Scottish minister Rev Hugh Cartwright on John 6:37 - **“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”**

Herewith are just a few brief extracts to ‘whet the appetite’ –

‘The entire Godhead is involved in the salvation of a soul... That God gave His people to Christ to save them carries with it the guarantee that they shall come to Him to be saved... Christ alone meets the need of the soul because Christ alone meets the requirements of God... And it is in the Person and Work of Christ that these requirements are met. In the sacrifice of "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16), "mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10). In His life and death the law of God has received infinite obedience and satisfaction... Only in Christ can this salvation be secured. As a man He had the necessary relationship to us to be able to act for us, and He had the capacity to suffer and to sympathize. His divinity gave infinite and eternal value and efficacy to all He did as Mediator. And that He is the Christ--the anointed, commissioned Servant of the Father--shows that all His work is in accordance with His will and satisfies His requirements. Thus Christ, alone, is able to save... Coming to Christ is the evidence of election.... If you have come to Christ it is because the Father gave you to Christ in an everlasting covenant, and by His Spirit persuaded and enabled you to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered in the Gospel... The harmony of the Godhead in salvation is the guarantee that every poor soul who comes to Christ will be welcome. When He says emphatically that He will in no wise cast him out He is showing the certainty of the believing sinner's acceptance... on no account will those be cast out who come in faith and penitence, as sinners to Christ... To be received by Christ is to "be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation" (Isaiah 45:17)’

These wonderful gospel truths have been rejected by Robert Sungenis, Scott Butler, Scott Hahn and Peter Kreeft and it is my firm conviction that they have thus shown themselves to be unregenerate **‘blind leaders of the blind’** who are currently on course to end up in a hellish ditch, taking with them those who look to them for spiritual guidance [see Matthew 15:14]

In closing, I want to finish with words written by Rob Zins that I quoted in my article – **‘Why Roman Catholicism is not Christian’ [Part2]** that is located on <http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-september-1998/> – words that shine the spotlight on the SAVING GOSPEL of the Lord Jesus Christ – a GOSPEL that Rome does not understand and declares belief in to be a passport to hell rather than heaven.

‘But the Gospel does more than explain. It offers a promise based upon the explanations. It offers eternal life based solely on the finished work of the atonement. It offers the promise that all sins are and will be forgiven for the sake of Christ alone. It offers the end of all personal sacrifices for personal sins. It offers the promise of all guilt removed on the basis of Christ alone and that through faith alone. It offers the security that all those in Christ will live protected with Him forever and will not lose this standing with God. Furthermore, the Gospel offers an end to all of man's vain attempts to do enough to warrant salvation. The gospel explains that Jesus has paid it all and that there is no “our share” or “our part” involved. The Gospel explains how God gives us Christ and His righteousness for our right standing with God. The gospel is the power of God for salvation because it holds the truth of all that God has done for mankind.’

Robert Sungenis is soul-damningly wrong in what he [and Rome] teach on 'being saved' as Rob Zins has so clearly sets forth in these soul-stirring, biblically-based declarations – “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” [Galatians 6:14]

Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries – 30th June 2011