

The letter the Belfast Telegraph didn't publish

Before coming to the details of the subject matter of this article namely **'The letter that the Belfast Telegraph didn't publish'** I need to first set out details of some letters that were published so that you will understand the context in which my letter to the Belfast Telegraph was sent but subsequently not published.

Letter from 'Father' Patrick McCafferty - published 4 August 2001

In the face of the implacable hatred that surfaces so regularly in our midst, the savage violence across the city in recent weeks and the frustrating obstinacy and intransigence of some political figures, it is easy for the ordinary person to lose heart. We appear to take one step forward and ten steps backward. What can I possibly do to make a difference in a seemingly intractable situation? The challenge facing Christians is how to really pray.

Real prayer is not confined to a rote form of words. The problem with so much prayer in the context of Northern Ireland is that it is insular, self-satisfied and, all too frequently, resembles the self-righteousness of the Pharisee in Jesus' parable. Real prayer is looking at God face-to-face and engaging with Him heart-to-heart. It is impossible to really pray and not be radically changed. When we really pray, in a way that is no longer superficial, we allow infinite love to make a home in us.

We begin to love others with God's own Love and, therefore, the most amazing things become possible. We quickly become capable of supernatural feats of forgiveness, mercy and compassion, for the fruit of true prayer is love. The real peace process is in the hands of ordinary men and women. What goes on among the politicians is doomed to failure unless people on the street seize the day. The question is do we dare to really pray so as to be profoundly changed in an encounter with the God Who has no favourites?

Sadly, for some Christians, prayer becomes a further exercise in self-deception - the belief that our group is more worthy of God's Love than another. Thus, we can pray to a god we have designed for ourselves, a god who shares, confirms and validates all our prejudices. If we dare to look the real God in the face, these notions will instantly collapse. This is the

difference that ordinary people can make. Not just quietly "saying our prayers", but being a constant, living, active, breathing Prayer and proclaiming the good news of Christ with our whole lives. In this way, we will become the instruments for growth and grace that our society so desperately needs.

**Letter [edited] from Cecil Andrews - "Take Heed" Ministries published
11 August 2001**

Patrick McCafferty [writeback 4 August] states that **'Real prayer is looking at God face-to-face and engaging with Him heart-to-heart'**. The problem is that the Church to which Patrick belongs neither encourages nor in certain cases permits such an approach where prayer is concerned.

Last week details were announced by the Vatican concerning World Rosary Day planned for 6 October when Roman Catholics in more than 140 countries will be encouraged to unitedly repeat the Rosary [this is 'rote' prayer which the Lord Himself directs His followers not to use - see Matthew 6:7]. The vast majority of the prayers offered will not be of the **'looking at God face-to-face'** variety but will be directed to Mary who died almost 2000 years ago and so will lead those people praying the Rosary into the sin of necromancy [see Deuteronomy 18:9-14]. Only a small percentage of the prayers offered will be directed to God 'face-to-face and heart-to-heart'.

Mr McCafferty states that if people pray in the manner he recommends they will be **capable 'of supernatural feats of forgiveness'**. In contrast, as an incentive to pray the Rosary on 6 October Roman Catholics are to be offered 'Plenary Indulgences' [supposed full forgiveness of unscriptural temporal punishment for sins].

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.

Letter from 'Father' Patrick McCafferty published 18 August 2001

Cecil Andrews (writeback, August 11) is clearly unaware of the enormous wealth of spiritual writing and teaching on prayer to be found in the Roman Catholic tradition. He should read the works of Saints John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Bernard, Bonaventure, Catherine of Sienna and countless others I could name. He would discover irrefutable evidence to disprove his claim that the Catholic Church discourages and, in certain cases, forbids direct prayer to God.

Neither does he understand the place of the Rosary in Catholic prayer. It is not a prayer directed to Mary. It is a meditation, with Mary, on the mysteries of her Son's life, death and resurrection.

The Rosary has nothing to do with Jesus' proscription in Matthew 6:7. The prayers of the Rosary are scriptural (the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and the angelic salutation in Luke 1:28&42). Christ, the Son of Mary, is the focus of the Rosary. Catholics are not **"babbling as the pagans do"** when praying the Rosary. Rather we are joining with Mary, the angels and saints, in unceasing prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:11) and repeating the praises of God endlessly (Revelation 4:8).

Cecil Andrews' charge that Catholics are guilty of necromancy is ludicrous. Our Lady and the saints in heaven are not **"dead and gone"**. They are in the land of the living (Psalm 116:9) and their deaths are precious in God's sight (Psalm 116:15): for **"He is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to Him everyone is alive"**. (Luke 20:37) St Paul also tells us: **"Alive or dead we belong to the Lord"** (Romans 14:9).

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.

Letter from John Morgan - Belfast published 18 August 2001

In the June 2001 newsletter of "Take Heed" Ministries (currently posted on their web-site), Cecil Andrews accuses the Belfast Telegraph of having a **"romance with Rome"** because, he claims, they present Catholicism in a favourable light at the expense of Protestant denominations. This is surely unfair and untrue. For example, the Belfast Telegraph regularly affords Mr Andrews space in 'writeback' to air his views and explain his position.

Certain types of Christians, in Northern Ireland, don't really know anything about the spirituality of Roman Catholics. Neither do they seem to want to know, unless it is a so-called "converted RC" who can be paraded around various venues. Mr Andrews appears to have no concept of the priest's relationship to his parishioners. For me, as a Catholic layperson, the priest is not a hindrance or in the way between God and me. Every Catholic has free access to a direct relationship with God expressed through private prayer and communal worship. The role of the priest in the community is ministerial.

He preaches God's Word and celebrates the Eucharist and the other Sacraments. He leads and presides at worship much in the same way that any Protestant minister does.

We now come to the text of a letter I sent to the Belfast Telegraph in response to the published letters [18 August 2001] of 'Father McCafferty and John Morgan. This is

'The letter that the Belfast Telegraph didn't publish'

Necromancy is the pagan/occultic attempt to communicate with the spirit of someone who has died physically. Patrick McCafferty [writeback 18 August] quotes several scriptures to show that physical death does not end a person's existence but that their spirit/soul continues to live on - I agree with the teaching of the scriptures quoted. Patrick certainly did not obtain his **"dead and gone"** quotation from anything that I wrote. Mary and the large number of Roman Catholic 'saints' to whom prayers are regularly addressed have died physically but their spirits/souls continue to live on and therefore these prayers do constitute necromancy and so come under God's condemnation of Deuteronomy 18:9-14. The content of the Rosary may well be based on scripture but the addressing of it for the most part to Mary constitutes sin and contradicts the Lord's clear teaching that approach to God by man is ALONE through Him - see John 14:6 [Christ - the only way

for man to God]; 1 Timothy 2:5 [Christ - the only mediator between God and man] 1 John 2:1 [Christ - the sinning Christian's only advocate/defence counsel in the court of heavenly justice] John 14:13-14 [Christ - the only prayer channel for man to God] Hebrews 7:25 [Christ - the only intercessor between God and man]. As for the rote repetition of Rosary prayers not being, to quote Patrick, 'babbling as the pagans do' one only has to examine the history of how the Rosary came to be incorporated into Roman Catholicism to see that it is - the concept was borrowed directly from Hinduism, Buddhism and other non-Christian religions and followed precisely their pattern and practice of 'repetitions and much speaking'.

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. [My rejection of such claimed power yet again places me under Rome's anathema - see Council of Trent; Session 14; Canon 3].

The web site article referred to by Mr Morgan [writeback 18 August] highlighted an imbalance in favour of Rome and her ecumenical 'daughters'

where photographic and journalistic content were concerned and did not apply to 'Writeback', which I have always found personally to be fair-minded. His assertion that **'every Catholic has free access to a direct relationship with God expressed through private prayer'** was rejected by no less a person than the present Pope. In 1989 the Los Angeles times reported as follows **'Rebutting a belief widely shared by Protestants and a growing number of Roman Catholics, Pope John Paul 2nd on Tuesday dismissed the widespread idea that one can obtain forgiveness directly from God and exhorted Catholics to confess more often to their priests.'** What a contrast this to the repentant publican who asked God directly for mercy [Luke 18:9-14] and according to the Lord this man went home **'justified'** [fully pardoned with no personal 'satisfaction' to make]. That is the glorious gospel of Christ and Him crucified which can and should be preached by Protestant ministers but which in contrast cannot be proclaimed by any Roman Catholic priest. They are primarily ordained to be members of a sacrifice-offering, sin-pardoning priesthood that is devoid of scriptural warrant. Whether Mr Morgan realises it or not they do in fact constitute a hindrance between him and God. My prayer has been and continues to be that many will turn from reliance on a Church and instead trust in Christ alone and in His finished work alone and so receive His full forgiveness directly and permanently.

Reply from 'Father' Patrick McCafferty [received via e-mail on 18 September 2001]to "The letter the Belfast Telegraph didn't publish".

Dear Cecil,

The Oxford dictionary defines necromancy as: "the art of predicting by means of communicating with the dead"; and "witchcraft". Nothing could be further removed from the authentic and true Catholic teaching on our relationship with Mary and the saints.

We have "fellowship with the saints in light" (Col 1:12) and death is no longer a barrier because of Jesus' own death and glorious resurrection. Physical death has become our Passover, with Christ, into the wondrous Reality that is the life of the blessed.

There now exists, in Christ, the loving communion of all the faithful. The Church in Heaven and the Church on earth is bonded in that "Love stronger than death" (Sg 8:6). God is the Source and Life of this communion we have with the saints. It is not sinful, therefore, to speak to Mary our Mother and our brothers and sisters - the saints - our friends in the glory of Heaven.

Our Blessed Lady and the saints have been through the struggles of life and the sufferings of this world. They do not forget about us but continue to encourage by the example of the lives they led on earth. They love us and pray for us. The saints are God's work of art (Eph 2:10), finished in all perfection because they fully co-operated with His grace.

To admire and love the saints is to praise the One Who is glorified in all His saints. Most especially, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the "most blessed of all women", (Lk 1:42) enjoys a peerless beauty and unique splendour as the most glorious masterpiece of God's Love.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Unique and Principal Mediator between God and humanity. However, in secondary and inferior ways, all Christians mediate God's grace and love in the world. Every Christian's vocation is to channel grace and incarnate Love in the world. In so doing and being, we are Christ's hands and feet and limbs, His continued presence on earth through the grace of the Holy Spirit, at work in the hearts of all who believe.

The Rosary was certainly not "borrowed directly from Hinduism, Buddhism", etc. Any superficial similarity to any non-Christian world religions is entirely coincidental. The devotion known as the Rosary is entirely Christian in nature and origin. Non-Christians may use beads and repeat prayers but this has no more connection with Rosary than the fact that they wear sandals has a connection with the fact that we wear shoes.

The Rosary is a meditative way of praying with our voices, minds and hearts. With our lips we repeat the words that Jesus taught us and the Archangel Gabriel's and Elizabeth's greeting to Our Lady. At the end of each decade we pray the Doxology: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

As we pray, vocally, we reflect in our minds on events from the Lord's Life: The Annunciation, the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth, the Nativity, Jesus' Presentation, His being found in the Temple among the doctors when He was twelve; His agony in Gethsemane, His scourging, His crowning with thorns, His carrying of the Cross, His crucifixion and death; His Resurrection, His Ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Mary and the apostles, Mary's Assumption into Heaven, her crowning as Queen of Heaven. Meditating in our minds on these mysteries we contemplate God's work of salvation in our hearts.

In regard to your interpretation of I Jn 5:14-16, it is certainly possible for "believing brothers" to fall from grace. Read Paul's advice about presiding elders. He cautions: "He should not be a new convert, in case pride turn his

head and then he might be condemned as the devil was condemned". (I Tim 3:6-7). Also, in II Peter 1:3-11, we read: "If you have a generous supply of these (goodness, faith, understanding, patience, self-control, true devotion, kindness towards people and love), they will not leave you ineffectual or unproductive: they will bring you to a real knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But without them a man is blind, or else short-sighted; he has forgotten how his past sins were washed away. Brothers, you have been called and chosen: work all the harder to justify it. If you do all these things there is no danger that you will ever fall away".

Believers can have both minor imperfections and glaring faults which we must always work at overcoming with the help of God's grace. In purgatory, the souls of the redeemed are purified of all imperfections as gold is refined in the furnace.

You claim, Cecil, that "the Church and its members have no authority to actually dispense God's forgiveness". Not so. I quote from a sermon of Blessed Isaac of Stella which well expresses the teaching of the Church: "There are two things which are proper to God alone: the honour we must pay Him by confessing our sins; and the power of forgiveness. It is our duty to make confession to Him; to Him we must look for forgiveness. It is for God alone to forgive sins and that is why we must confess to Him.

But the Almighty took as His bride the weak woman, the Most High took the lowly maiden, He made the serving woman a queen: she whose place was behind Him, at His feet, He raised to sit beside Him. She was born from His side; from there He took her as His bride. And, just as all that is the Father's is the Son's, and all that is the Son's is the Father's, since by nature they are One, so too the Bridegroom gave all He had to the bride, and held in common with her all that was hers, because He had made her one with Himself and the Father.

The Son, pleading for His bride, says to the Father: "I desire that as You and I are One, so too they may be one with Us". The Bridegroom then is One with the Father and one with His bride. All that He found alien in her, He took away by nailing it to the Cross. He bore her sins on the Cross and took them away on the Cross. He took upon Himself what was her own proper nature and clothed Himself in it; what was His own as God, He gave to her. He took away what was of the devil; what was human He took upon Himself; what was divine He conferred on her, so that all that belongs to the bride should become the Bridegroom's.

Hence, He Who committed no sin, He on Whose lips no guile was found, can say: 'Have mercy on Me, O Lord, for I am weak'. So He Who possesses her weakness makes His own her lamentation, and all that is the

Bridegroom's is made the bride's. From this, then, follow the honour of confession and the power of forgiveness. So with truth it can be said: 'Go! Show yourself to the priest'.

Without Christ, therefore, the Church can forgive no sin; but it is Christ's Will to forgive no sin without the Church. The Church can only forgive the sin of one who is penitent, that is, of one whom Christ has touched; and Christ would not want to hold forgiven the sin of one who despises the Church. 'What God has joined together, let no one put asunder.' 'This is a great mystery and I take it to mean Christ and the Church'.

Therefore, do not sever the Head from the Body so that the Whole Christ no longer exists. For Christ is not whole and entire without the Church, nor the Church without Christ. The Whole Christ, the Complete Christ, is Head and Body. That is why He can say: "No one has ascended into Heaven, but the Son of Man Who is in Heaven". He is the only Man Who can forgive sins". (Blessed Isaac of Stella, Sermon 11).

Catholics do have, in their private prayer, direct and unhindered access to God at all times. Catholics also believe in the priesthood of all believers. The Lord, however, has also established in His Church the ministerial priesthood to continue His own Ministry as High Priest and Shepherd.

For you to pray that "many will turn from reliance on a Church and instead trust in Christ alone" makes no sense. God has founded His Church. There is no contradiction between Christ and His Church. "Christ loved the Church and sacrificed Himself for her". And so, we need the communion of the Church which is held fast in the Love of the Most Holy Trinity.

Yours Sincerely, in Jesus Christ,

Fr Patrick McCafferty.

Response to 'Father' McCafferty's e-mail reply to my article 'The letter the Belfast Telegraph didn't publish'

As is usual, Patrick in his response has used a lot of image-provoking language to divert the readers' attention from 2 things - [1] the weakness of his arguments on certain points and [2] to mask the fact that he hasn't actually dealt with some of the points of argument.

Where 'Necromancy' is concerned the dictionary definition supplied by Patrick contains 2 elements - [1] the PURPOSE '*predicting (the future)*' and

[2] the PRACTICE - '*communicating {with the dead}*'. It is clear from a reading of God's Word, not only in Deuteronomy 18:9-14 but also in passages such as Leviticus 19:31, Leviticus 20:6 & 27 and particularly in the case of Saul and his attempt to make contact with the deceased prophet Samuel [1 Samuel 28:6-20 and 1 Chronicles 10:13] that the entire concept [PRACTICE and PURPOSE] of the living seeking to communicate with the spirits of those now deceased is forbidden by and an abomination to Almighty God who ALONE has the divine ability to hear simultaneous prayer offered to him by untold numbers from a myriad of places around the natural world. When it comes to the PRACTICALITY of praying the Rosary or offering prayers and petitions to the many Roman Catholic 'saints' [such as are seen in the personal columns of newspapers] for the Roman Catholic Mary and the other 'prayed to' departed 'saints' to have the ability to hear the prayers offered to them they would need to be divine and that they most certainly are not. We read in **Revelation 21:3** "**And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God**". There is a clear distinction between the divine Creator [HIM] and His creation [THEM]. He alone has the divine attribute to enable Him to hear every prayer offered to Him by His living Saints and by those now dwelling in glory with Him [see Revelation 6:10]. To attempt to communicate with the dead opens the door to the world of the Occult and to encounters with 'familiar [evil] spirits' referred to in Old Testament passages already cited above. It is no wonder that demonic, scripture contradicting, supposed apparitions of 'Mary' have been appearing for centuries around the world in response to all the prayers being directed to her despite the prohibition of God's Word.

Patrick seeks to justify communication between the living and the dead on the basis of a supposed quotation from **Colossians 1:12** - Patrick's letter reads 'We have "***fellowship with the saints in light***" and by this 'quotation' he is seeking to convey the impression that those alive on earth have 'fellowship' [which he takes to mean 'communication'] with those in heaven. I'm not sure what version of the Bible Patrick is quoting from but in the '*Christian Community Bible - Catholic Pastoral Edition*' [with official *Imprimatur*] **Colossians 1:12** reads '**Constantly give thanks to the Father who has empowered us to receive our share in the inheritance of the saints in his kingdom of light**'. The *Authorised Version* reads "**Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light**". This verse encourages true believers to give thanks to God their Father [notice who is being communicated with] for the benefits they, [the living Saints] because of God's graciously bestowed salvation, will one day inherit because of Christ [currently these benefits are reserved as "**an inheritance**" for the living Saints {because of the Person

and work of Christ alone} in heaven - see 1 Peter 1:3-4] and in this verse Paul teaches us [the living Saints] that our **“inheritance”** will be just like that of the Saints who have already died and gone to heaven. This verse does not teach that ‘living saints’ have direct communication with ‘dead saints’.

Concerning Patrick’s denial that the idea of using stringed beads [*prayer counters or rosary-beads*] as The Catholic Encyclopedia refers to them - see *‘Babylon Mystery Religion’* by Ralph Woodrow, page 27] was not borrowed by Roman Catholicism from the practice of the surrounding Pagan religions that preceded Roman Catholicism by many centuries, well, the facts of history would tell a different story. Clearly its introduction into Roman Catholicism coincided with Roman Catholic encounters with those using such a pagan practice. In addition the clear similarities alone indicate that the pagan practice was simply grafted practically wholesale into the Roman Catholic system. As for ‘foot-coverings’ - it is perfectly credible that people came up with the same idea in different places in order to protect their feet but to imply on the basis of this argument that the construction of a string of beads for prayer purposes was likewise purely coincidental is asking people to stretch the bounds of credibility rather far.

Patrick, in his rejection of what I said about 1 John 5:14-16 maintains that it is possible for a believer to ‘fall from grace’, in other words he is still identifying ‘the sins unto death and not unto death’ in terms of God’s judgment upon such actions rather than as we explained man’s judgment upon such actions which is the proper basis of understanding when these verses are taken in their full context by going back to verse 12. In order to back-up his claim that ‘believing brothers’ can ‘fall from grace’ he first of all refers to 1 Timothy 3:6-7 and again quotes from an unknown Bible version as follows **‘He [a bishop] should not be a new convert, in case pride turn his head and then he might be condemned as the devil was condemned’**. However when I turn to this passage in the *‘Christian Community Bible - Catholic Pastoral Edition’* I find that it reads as follows in verse 6 **‘He must not be a recent convert lest he become conceited and fall into the same condemnation as the devil’** - quite why Patrick also cited verse 7 is not clear as it does not appear to feature in his quotation. In the *Authorised Version* verse 6 reads **“Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil”**. This verse is simply warning against a young believer being appointed to the office of Bishop and in consequence running the risk of having a ‘swollen head’ and being guilty of the sin of pride which was the ruination of the devil. The verse is identifying and warning against the cause of a particular sin/condemnation, namely pride and not the eternal consequences of this sin. Unlike the devil and fallen angels for whom there is no redemption, a true born-again, redeemed believer is eternally secure from condemnation

because His eternal life is guaranteed by the One who died to secure it for him - see John 10: 11, 15-16, 27-29. Also Paul confirms this marvellous eternal security in Romans 8:28-39.

Patrick then goes on to further cite 2 Peter 1:3-11. Again when checking what he has quoted he appears to have stopped his quotation at verse 10. The crucial quote that he has given reads as follows **'If you do all these things there is no danger that you will ever fall away'**. The *'Christian Community Bible - Catholic Pastoral Edition'* reads as follows in verse 10 **'Therefore brothers and sisters strive more and more to respond to the call of God who chose you. If you do so you will never stumble'**. The *Authorised Version* reads in verse 10 **"Wherefore the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall"**. This verse is encouraging believers to behave as God's chosen people should behave and warning believers against falling [stumbling] into sinful ways and practices, which would be out of character for a genuine true believer. It is dealing with sanctification and not teaching that a believer can fall from grace and so lose their salvation.

Patrick then goes on to affirm his belief in **'purgatory'** where as he puts it **'the souls of the redeemed are purified of all imperfections as gold is refined in the furnace'** ie through personal suffering and satisfaction. What a blatant denial of Christ's all sufficient work of redemption on behalf of His people at Calvary - **"When he [Christ] had by himself [no additional suffering and satisfaction required to be endured or offered by those for whom Christ died] PURGED our sins [he] sat down [indicating a COMPLETED work] at the right hand of the Majesty on high" [Hebrews 1:3]; "Unto him [Christ] that loved us and washed us from our sins [no condemnation] in his own blood" [complete satisfaction] [Revelation 1:5].**

Patrick then challenged my claim that **'The Church and its members have no authority to actually dispense God's forgiveness'**. To make a case for such authority he quotes from a sermon preached by 'Blessed Isaac of Stella'. Mixed in with a number of truths concerning the relationship of Christ [the bridegroom] to the church [His bride] there is also a dangerous cocktail of fanciful, unscriptural error such as **'Without Christ therefore the Church can forgive no sin; but it is Christ's will to forgive no sin without the Church'**. In response, can I ask where was the necessity of **'the Church'** for forgiveness set out, when Peter said to the sinful Simon the sorcerer **"thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore and pray God [no confessional booth set up] if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" [Acts 8:21-22].** Being united to Christ, as born-again believers are, does not confer on those saved sinners divine attributes and abilities such as the exclusively divine prerogative to forgive repentant

sinners. The scribes of Jesus' day often 'got it wrong' but on one occasion they were quite right - we read of it in **Mark 2:5-7**. The Lord has just said to a young man "**Son, thy sins be forgiven thee**" and the response of the scribes who of course looked upon the Lord as a mere man was one of sheer horror and their thinking was - this is blasphemy for "**who can forgive sins but God only?**" [*Christian Community Bible - Catholic Pastoral edition 'Who can forgive sins except God?'*]. They were right about who has the power to forgive sins - God alone - but wrong in questioning Jesus' right to forgive sins for they were ignorant of the fact that He was "**God...manifest in the flesh**" [1 Timothy 3:16]. Paul set out the "**glad tidings**" [Acts 13:32] of the true Christian gospel that "**through this man [Christ] is PREACHED unto you the forgiveness of sins and BY HIM [Christ] all that believe are justified**" [pardoned/forgiven] [Acts 13:38-39]. Christians [The Church] preach that forgiveness is available through faith in Christ but it is Christ Himself [God] who graciously dispenses His forgiveness directly to the redeemed heart and mind of every true believer by His gift of faith [Ephesians 2:8].

On this question of 'forgiveness' isn't it strange that Patrick made no reference to the Pope's teaching in America that was referred to in my quote from the Los Angeles Times back in 1989 - '**Rebutting a belief widely shared by Protestants and a growing number of Roman Catholics, Pope John Paul 2nd on Tuesday dismissed the widespread idea that one can obtain forgiveness directly from God and exhorted Catholics to confess more often to their priests.**' God's Word teaches that divine forgiveness is available directly from God if to Him we confess our sins - see Psalm 32:5, Nehemiah 1:4-11, Daniel 9:3-19, Proverbs 28:13 & 1 John 1:6-9. As for Patrick's claim that '*The Lord however has also established in His Church the ministerial priesthood [ie Roman Catholic priests ordained to offer the sacrifice of the Mass and empowered to forgive sins] to continue His own Ministry as High Priest and Shepherd*' - this is refuted by God's Word in **Hebrews 7:24-25** "**But this man, [Christ] because he continueth ever, hath an UNCHANGEABLE priesthood, wherefore HE is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God BY HIM, seeing HE ever liveth to make intercession for them**". Post Calvary the Bible speaks of this unique Melchisedec priesthood held by and exercised only by the risen Lord in heaven and of the earthly priesthood of all born-again believers as described by Peter in 1 Peter 2:5 & 9 and by John in Revelation 1:6. Nowhere is a '*ministerial priesthood*' sanctioned with power either to offer a propitiatory sacrifice [sacrifice of The Mass] for the remission of the sins of the living and the dead or to dispense forgiveness and prescribe 'satisfaction' [sacrament of penance and reconciliation] to deal with the confessed sin. These powers claimed by and ascribed to the Roman Catholic priesthood have no foundation in scripture. The priesthood of born-

again believers are told by God to “**present YOUR bodies** [not a consecrated, supposedly transubstantiated piece of bread claimed to be the body of Christ] **a living sacrifice**” [Romans 12:1] and in Hebrews 13:15 believers are told “**By him** [Christ - not through any Church or ministerial priesthood] **therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name**”.

Finally Patrick wrote ‘*For you to pray that “many will turn from reliance on a Church and instead trust in Christ alone” makes no sense*’. In response can I say that the many former Roman Catholics [including a number who were members of Patrick’s ‘*ministerial priesthood*’] know exactly the sense of what I wrote. Prior to their conversion they were telling people ‘Come to our Roman Catholic Church and we will sacramentally baptise you with water into Christianity’ but now they have a new [biblical] gospel to preach of ‘Come to Christ and he will spiritually baptise you into His Church’ [1 Corinthians 12:13]. In the first instance people were to rely not only initially on the Roman Catholic church to make them Christians but also thereafter, through observance of the Roman Catholic sacramental system, to maintain their hold on Christianity [which is why the 1994 Catholic Catechism in paragraph 1129 declares that for believers the sacraments are necessary for salvation]. That is ‘*reliance on a church*’. But now these former Roman Catholics preach reliance on Christ ALONE for the gift and maintenance of eternal life and that makes all the spiritual sense in the world [and the world to come] to them.

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”

Philippians 4:6-7

I have sought by the help of the Holy Spirit to be a good ‘**Berean**’ [see Acts 17:11] in my response to Patrick - I leave it for you the reader to decide which expressed teachings, in the light of the scriptures, ‘**are so**’.

Cecil Andrews - “Take Heed” Ministries - 20th September 2001