

The Passion of the Christ: A Biblical Critique of the Mel Gibson Film

[Brian Schwertley](#)

A movie produced and directed by Mel Gibson was released recently about the last twelve hours of Jesus' life entitled *The Passion of the Christ*. This film received a huge amount of publicity before its release in late February 2004. The negative publicity has come primarily from various Jewish groups that are concerned with anti-Semitism. However, the movie received much praise and adulation from Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, conservative radio talk show hosts and even a few Jewish rabbis. A number of Romanists and Evangelicals have even spoken of the movie as a great tool of evangelism, revival and moral societal change. Given the hoopla surrounding the release of this film, Bible-believing Christians need to ask some important questions regarding the movie's content, its use as a tool of evangelism and the buzz surrounding it.

(1) The first question that needs to be addressed is: "Is it appropriate or lawful for a person to pretend to be Jesus in a passion play or movie"? Although this question will immediately be dismissed by most Evangelicals and even some "Reformed" believers (e.g., many of the so-called "theonomists") as absurd, it is a very important question. Plays or movies in which men pretend to be Jesus Christ are an explicit violation of the second commandment and are blasphemous.¹

¹ All the Reformed confessions and catechisms speak with one voice *against* making visual representations of Christ. The Westminster Larger Catechism says, "The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counseling, commanding, using, and anywise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; tolerating a false religion; **the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever; all worshiping of it, or God in it or by it;** the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them; all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretense whatsoever; simony; sacrilege; all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed. (LC # 109) The Heidelberg Catechism declares, "**We are not to make an image of God in any way**, nor to worship him in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word (Deut. 4:15-19; Isa. 40:18-25; Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:23; Lev. 10:1-7; Deut. 12:30; 1 Sam. 15:22-23; Matt. 15:9; John 4:23-24)...**God cannot and may not be visibly portrayed in any way.** Creatures may be portrayed, but God forbids us to make or have any images of them in order to worship them or to serve God through them (Ex. 34:13-14, 17; Num. 33:52; 2 Kings. 18:4-5; Isaiah 40:25). (Q/A 96-97)

This was also the opinion of the early church. A major church council in Constantinople (A. D. 754) decreed: "If any person shall divide human nature, united to the Person of God the Word; and, having it only in the imagination of his mind, shall therefore, attempt to paint the same in an Image; let him be holden as accursed. If any person shall divide Christ, being but one, into two persons; placing on the one side the Son of God, and on the other side the son of Mary; neither doth confess the continual union that is made; and by that reason doth paint in an Image of the son of Mary, as subsisting by himself; let him be accursed. If any person shall paint in an Image the human nature, being deified by the uniting thereof to God the Word; separating the same as it were from the Godhead assumed and deified; let him be holden as accursed." Regarding this council Philip Schaff writes, "The counsel, appealing to the second commandment and other scripture passages denouncing idolatry (Rom. 1:23, 25; John 4:24), and opinions of the Fathers (Epiphanius, Eusebius, Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, etc.), condemned and forbade the

The second commandment (read Ex. 20:4-5; Dt. 5:8-11) forbids worshiping idols, images of God and the religious use of images as aids to worship or devotion. Evangelicals will argue that a picture of Jesus or a person portraying Him in a movie or play is permissible because: (a) it is known that the person playing the Messiah is not really the Lord and (b) the portrayal is purely educational, not devotional. No one is bowing down to or worshiping the image of the Savior on the movie screen (c) Jesus was and is both God and man. Therefore, his human nature can be lawfully depicted in the same manner as any other human such as George Washington or one's spouse.

Although Evangelicals and backslidden Reformed Christians believe that images of Jesus are permissible there are a number of solid biblical reasons why such images are unlawful.

First, Christ is unique because He is both God and man in *one person*. This fact means that all the divine attributes of God the Son (as well as everything relating to Jesus' human nature) are attributable to the *one person*: the divine-human mediator. (Reformed theologians refer to this as the communication of the attributes.) Consequently, the disciples of our Lord could lawfully worship the person of Christ. They could bow before Him in worship, wipe His feet with their tears and lean upon His breast with loving adoration. Because of who our Lord is (i.e. fully God and fully man in *one person*) any image or representation of Him is automatically religious or devotional in nature. A picture of Jesus or a representation of Him in a play or movie *should* immediately evoke thoughts of love and adoration to the Savior. If an image brings thoughts of worship and praise toward the Son of God, then obviously the image is an aid or medium to worship even if people are not bowing down to the image. Therefore, all pictures, statues or portrayals of our Lord are idolatrous. Further, anyone who pretends to be the Messiah in a play or movie is (whether he is aware of it or not) pretending to be God which is blasphemous and incredibly wicked.

Second, the people who argue that pictures or representations of Jesus are lawful do so on the *false assumption* that the two natures of Christ can be separated. Such people will often admit that the Bible strongly condemns making representations of God. But (they will argue) pictures of the Savior's human nature are permissible. But (we ask), if only the Lord's human nature is represented then are you not portraying the Messiah as *infinitely less* than He was, is, and ever shall be? Are you not separating the two natures of Jesus? Are you not teaching a false theology regarding God's Son? All pictures, statues, and portrayals of the Savior implicitly promote the ancient heresy of Nestorius who separated the two natures of Christ – the human from the divine.

Third, all pictures or portrayals of the Savior are a violation of the ninth commandment because they present a false representation of our Lord's physical appearance. If God wanted His people throughout history to have a picture or representation of His Son then He could have given us a detailed description of Jesus in

public and private worship of sacred images on pain of deposition and excommunication...It denounced all religious representations by painter or sculptor as presumptuous, pagan and idolatrous. Those who make pictures of the Savior, who is God as well as man in one inseparable person, either limit the incomprehensible Godhead to the bounds of created flesh, or confound his two natures like Eutyches, or separate them, like Nestorius, or deny his Godhead, like Arius; and those who worship such a picture are guilty of the same heresy and blasphemy." (*History of the Christian Church* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987 (1910)], 4:457-458)

the gospel accounts. The Bible, however, gives us almost no information at all regarding the Savior's appearance. Therefore, all pictures or portrayals of Christ are inaccurate. They are subjective, artistic, false representations of the Son of God. This fact raises an important question. Is it appropriate to make an image of the God-man based on a human fantasy?² While there is certainly nothing wrong with portraying a great figure from ancient history in a painting or movie, Christ is not like other people. He alone is both God and man. He alone is the supreme object of a believer's faith. Consequently, everything we are to believe concerning Him must come from divine revelation alone. "That which is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).

Pictures or movie portrayals of our Lord are lies of the imagination that can only pervert the faith and degrade the doctrine of Christ. If we look to the work of a man's imagination for edification we certainly will be disappointed. When God has told us exactly what He wants us to know and believe concerning His Son, He can only be greatly displeased by the false images set up by sinful man (e.g. the blond, blue-eyed effeminate Jesus; the black power Jesus; the long-haired Hollywood hippie Jesus; the wimpy evangelical movie Jesus; the "Christian" bookstore muscular Jesus; the tall, dark, handsome Mel Gibson Jesus). Further, portrayals of Christ whether in pictures or movies are invariably reflections of the artist's or director's theology and worldview. Modernists, for example, portray the Lord as the meek, humble teacher who was merely a friendly teacher of ethics who never preached about sin, judgment or the wrath to come. Romanists, in their portrayal of Christ, are often mystical and give an undue emphasis to the role of Mary, Jesus' mother, and pervert the meaning of the atonement (e.g. they detract from its efficacy because of their doctrine of the mass which teaches that the Savior is re-sacrificed by priests).

Fourth, both the Bible and church history teach that religious images invented by men for educational or devotional use are snares of the devil that corrupt the people of God with idolatry and declension. Because of our sinful natures the hearts of men are easily and sadly frequently drawn toward sensual, corrupt forms of worship. In 2 Kings 18:4 we read that godly king Hezekiah broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made because the people of Israel were burning incense to it. The bronze serpent (unlike pictures of Christ) was a lawful image because it was commanded by God. Yet as soon as

² An evangelical reviewer of the film admitted that it was a real struggle not to commit idolatry while watching the movie. He writes, "I found it very troublesome that people identify Jim the actor with Jesus. My mind and emotions never made the transition to actually believing that Jim was Jesus. At one time I began to feel emotion as Jesus, nailed to the cross, cried out for God to forgive His murderers. Interestingly, my mind immediately intervened and kept me from seeing Jim as Jesus. I simply could not and ultimately did not want to see the real Jesus in this movie. I could not identify with this human playing my Lord and my Savior. My mind told me that making such a leap would be to succumb to idolatry." (Tim Challies, Internet Article, *Movie Review: The Passion of the Christ, Part 2*, <http://www.challies.com/archives/000195.html>) The reviewer cited above does not seem to understand that the point of a film is to cause an audience to completely forget that actors are up on the screen so that the characters are regarded as really the people being portrayed. That is why portraying Jesus is so sinful and blasphemous. Once we understand the point of any play or film, we also understand why films should never be made about Christ. Any identification of the actor with the Savior is immediately idolatry. Any image of the Messiah whether in art, sculpture, movies or plays is an enticement to devotion to a false image of God. When we meditate on Jesus our minds should go immediately to the text of Scripture and not some idolatrous fantasy.

it became a religious devotional object Jehovah ordered it destroyed as an item of superstition and idolatry.

In the ancient church, pictures were made to honor the saints, the virgin Mary and Jesus. This practice led to all sorts of superstitious, corrupt idolatrous practices: prayer to dead saints; the adoration and worship of Mary; kissing the feet of statues of the saints; keeping and worshipping of relics; saints days; pilgrimages; the dressing up of statues in different clothes for different holy days; parades with statues and pictures in honor of saints, the virgin mother and Christ; cathedrals built to honor the relics of dead saints and so on. There is no question that many of the poor deluded souls who led the church down the dark demonic path of Romanism were sincere. They probably were very pious and had the best of motives. But their love of human devices, their additions to the worship that God had authorized led to the full-blown, damnable religion of popery. “But say the Papists, images are laymen’s books, and they are good to put them in the mind of God. One of the Popish Councils affirmed, that we might learn more by an image than by a long study of the Scriptures...For Papists to say they make use of an image to put them in mind of God, is as if a woman should say she keeps company with another man to put her in mind of her husband.”³

The fact that many prominent Evangelical leaders in America (e.g., James Dobson, Billy Graham, Rick Warren, Lee Strobel, Greg Laurie, etc.) are vigorously promoting a movie that expressly violates the second and ninth commandments; that in many ways a Roman Catholic propaganda piece reveals the sorry state of so-called conservative Christianity in our nation today. It (generally speaking) is antinomian, pragmatic, arminian, ecumenical, pluralistic and lukewarm. “What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it; the molded image a teacher of lies, that the maker of its mold should trust in it, to make mute idols?” (Hab. 2:18).

(2) The second question the Gibson film raises is: “Is drama, either in the form of a play or film, the lawful, God-ordained method of spreading the gospel?” This question is important not only because Evangelical and Romanist leaders are speaking of the Gibson movie as one of the greatest evangelistic opportunities of all time, but also because Evangelical churches in our time are more and more turning away from the importance of preaching and doctrine toward more “exciting”, sensual, entertaining mediums such as drama, video, film and music. (With the popularity of the “church growth movement”, the decline of exegetical doctrinal teaching and the reliance on pragmatic methods and gimmicks in many churches today we should not be surprised when the vast majority of Evangelicals promote such papal idolatrous trash.)

A study of the New Testament reveals that God has chosen the foolishness of preaching and not drama to save the lost. This truth is demonstrated in Scripture by both historical example and explicit teaching. Preaching was the method of both Christ (Mt. 4:17; 10:7; 11:5; Lk. 4:18, 48; Col. 1:28; Eph. 3:8; 2 Tim. 4:2) and the apostles (Lk. 9:2; Ac. 10:42; 15:20; Rom. 1:15; 10:7; 1 Cor. 1:17; 2 Cor. 2:12), not drama. The apostles and evangelists of the first century could have used drama or stage plays to make people aware of Jesus for drama was popular with Greeks and Romans. Yet, they never resorted to such methods. Paul says that Christ sent him “to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:17); that “it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ

³ Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1965 [1692, 1890]), 61.

crucified” (1 Cor. 1:21-23). The apostles were obedient to the resurrected Lord who said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15). When the apostle Paul discussed how people come to a saving knowledge of Christ he spoke of gospel preaching. “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things’...So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:14-15, 17). The God-ordained, authorized method of reaching the lost is not through dance troupes, rock and roll bands, puppet shows, juggling clowns, or Hollywood movies. It is through preachers who are qualified (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Eph. 4:11-12), ordained (Ac. 13:2-3) and sent out by the church (Rom. 10:15; Ac. 12:3).

Why did God choose the medium of preaching to spread the gospel throughout the world? After all, preaching is not very flashy or popular. Although the Bible does not specifically answer this question (other than to say that it pleased God, 1 Cor. 1:21), it is not hard to deduce the answer to this question. Pictures, dramas or movies where historical events are acted out can never do biblical justice to the message of the gospel. Why? Because the gospel involves not only historical facts but also the Spirit-inspired interpretation of those facts. A movie simply cannot theologically convey or define Christ, God, the atonement, justification or sanctification.

A movie is very good at shocking an audience or manipulating people’s emotions. However, can a movie adequately explain the incarnation: that the Son assumed a human nature; that Jesus is both God and man in one person? A movie can dramatically portray suffering on the cross. But, can a movie ever come close to explaining the depth of the Savior’s suffering, that the greatest anguish was not caused by the physical pain but by the separation from the Father’s love and favor? Can a film explain the vicarious atonement, the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, the meaning of regeneration or the nature of saving faith? Obviously, drama or movies are a very poor medium for conveying doctrinal truths. Preaching from God’s Word contains the historical facts of the gospel, the interpretation of those facts and their application to particular people. A film cannot rebuke a person for violating God’s law or command them to repent of particular sins. A film does not tell particular people to place their trust in Christ. A movie is impersonal. It can never address a sinner in a prophetic, applicatory manner. God has chosen preaching to reach the lost. Therefore, we ought to trust God, obey Him and stop trusting in our own wisdom or devices. The modern evangelical obsession with human inventions and gimmicks in order to grow the church is ushering Christendom into a new dark age of superstition and apostasy. In light of the rush into the depraved abyss of human pragmatism, Reformed churches have an important responsibility to stand up for the commandments of God (i.e., both tables of the law and not just the second table as many hypocritical antinomian “theonomists” have done) and be faithful to their godly standards.

Further, movies must of necessity take certain liberties with the historical facts as presented in the gospels. A film must be based on a screen play that is based on the gospels or on a historical novel or both. Thus, the adaptation of the life of Jesus to the screen will involve detracting from and adding to the Bible in order to produce a flowing, interesting film. The Gibson film is especially guilty of adding to Scripture because it is

largely based on a book (*The Dolorous Passion of Christ*) written by a nun (Anne Emmerich). A reviewer of the Gibson film informs us of Emmerich's Romanist credentials. He writes, "Emmerich is known as being a Mystic, Stigmatist, Visionary, and Prophet. She apparently received many visions in which God provided her details about Jesus' last days that are not contained in the Bible. This extra-Biblical account of Jesus' suffering provided many of the smaller details in the movie such as Pilate's wife providing the cloth to Mary as well as Simon and Jesus linking arms as they held the cross. It also provided inspiration for some of the words Peter spoke, such as his expression of unworthiness before Mary. Most troubling is that it provided many of the words Jesus spoke. A great number of Jesus' words from the movie are drawn not from the Bible but from Emmerich. The movie makes no attempt to show what was drawn directly from the Bible and what was drawn from extra-Biblical writing...Reading through *The Dolorous Passion of Christ* after seeing the movie I was shocked by how closely the script of *The Passion of the Christ* follows this book. So much of what I assumed was artistic license was actually drawn from supposed extra-Biblical revelation."⁴ Given Emmerich's perverse papal theology and her delusional false revelations we should not be surprised to discover that the Gibson film greatly exaggerates and distorts Mary's importance and role in salvation history. Whenever a movie places historical events in the context of the gospel accounts that never really occurred, or places words on the lips of the Savior that were never spoken, or detracts from the gospel narratives (Gibson, for example, has removed from the subtitles the phrase spoken by the Jewish mob, "His blood lay on us and our children" in order to appease certain Jewish groups and secular humanists), then all those responsible for that film are guilty of a great sin. The Bible explicitly and repeatedly condemns adding to or detracting from what God has said in His Word (read Dt. 4:2; Pr. 30:5-6; Josh. 1:7-8). There is even a curse pronounced by Scripture itself against anyone who would dare add to or detract from the Bible (Rev. 22:19).

(3) The third question that the Gibson movie raises is: "What is the theology or gospel that Mel Gibson is advocating?" Gibson is what is called a Tridentine Roman Catholic. What this means is that he rejects the changes of Vatican II and thus strictly follows the old style Romanism of Trent (A.D. 1564). In other words Gibson is not a lukewarm, secularized Roman Catholic but a hard core adherent and advocate. He believes that outside of the papal fold there is no salvation; that the great reformers of the Protestant Reformation are damnable heretics. Therefore, the Gibson film is essentially a propaganda piece for Romanism. It does not point men to the Christ of Scripture; nor does it teach the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone.

The deceived Evangelical leaders who are deficient in their understanding of Scripture and theology need to understand just how unscriptural and deadly the papal doctrine of salvation is. In order to demonstrate that the Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation is a damnable heresy let us briefly contrast the biblical teaching on salvation with Romanist doctrine on this topic.

The Bible teaches that all those who believe in Jesus (as revealed in the holy Scriptures) are completely saved by Him. His sacrificial death on the cross (that occurred once and for all) *expiates* the sins of the elect (i.e., it removes the guilt and penalty or

⁴Tim Challies, Internet Article, *Movie Review: The Passion of the Christ (Part Two)*, available at <http://www.challies.com/archives/000195html>.

liability of punishment of all of a believer's sins: past, present and future); *propitiates* God's wrath (i.e., Jesus removes God's anger, wrath and judgment against believing sinners by enduring the penalty they deserved. His death was vicarious); *reconciles* believing sinners to God (i.e., The Savior restores believers to God's full favor and fellowship); and *redeems* the elect in the broadest sense of the term (i.e., believers are justified, sanctified, eventually glorified; and, are released from the grip of the devil).

The very moment that a person believes or trusts in the person and work of Christ (as defined by Scripture) he is *justified* before God. That is, the believing sinner is declared righteous in the heavenly court *solely* because of what Christ accomplished or His merits. Believers are declared righteous because their guilt is *imputed* to Christ on the cross, and Jesus' perfect righteousness is imputed to the believer's account. Thus, on the day of judgment we are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. When God looks at us, He sees the perfect righteousness of the Savior. Christ's sacrificial death is perfect, final, never to be repeated, sufficient and efficacious. All those for whom Jesus died will certainly be saved because the Messiah's work of redemption not only is the foundation or ground of a believer's salvation but also is the guarantee of its application as well.

The Bible teaches that we obtain everything that Jesus accomplished for us by faith alone apart from the works of the law. Faith is the alone instrument by which we lay hold of the merits of Christ. Faith, which is a gift of God, is non meritorious. We are saved through faith, *not* because of faith. Faith is like a steel wedding ring that in itself has no intrinsic value but holds a flawless, perfectly cut ten carat diamond (the person and work of Christ). After we lay hold of Jesus by faith we live a life of good works and obedience out of gratitude for what our Lord has done, not as a means to obtain salvation.

The Roman Catholic Church has a view of salvation that contradicts the teaching of Scripture at several key points. The papal theory does not regard the sacrificial death of Jesus as sufficient for the salvation of sinners. It is a *syncretistic* system which combines the merits of Christ with the inward holiness and good works of the sinner. It confounds justification which is a once and for all, objective, instantaneous act of God with sanctification which is a long gradual process within man which is never even completed in this life.

A key to understanding Romanism's perversion of Christ's work is their rejection of the biblical doctrine of imputation for the idea of an infused righteousness. Roman Catholics do not view justification as a legal act but as an inward process. According to Papal doctrine initial justification occurs when a person submits to Roman Catholic baptism during which a person is regenerated and has grace infused into him. This infusion begins collaboration between God and man.⁵ There is the merit of Christ and

⁵ "...in that new birth, there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of his passion, the grace whereby they are made just" (*Trent*, 6th session, ch. 3). "Justification of the impious is...a translation...And this translation, since the promulgation of the Gospel, can not be effected, without the laver of regeneration" (*Trent*, 6th session, ch. 4). "...the instrumental cause [of justification] is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which no man was ever justified" (*Trent*, 6th session, ch. 7). The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) reads: "Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy...The grace of Christ...is the *sanctifying* or *deifying* grace received in baptism" (*Trent* 6th session).

Trent says, "If any one saith, that God always remits the whole punishment together with the guilt, and that the satisfaction of penitents is no other than the faith whereby they apprehend that Christ has satisfied for them: let him be anathema" (*Trent* 6th session). "If any one saith, that men are justified, either by the

also the merit of man as he cooperates with God's grace. Romanists deny that they are teaching salvation by faith plus works by arguing that man's merit is a result of God's grace. God started the process, therefore man's earned merit is ultimately due to God.

According to Rome a person can increase his justification by doing good works, doing penance, going to mass and keeping the sacraments of the church. If a person is bad his justification can decrease and a person can even lose his justification. The ultimate goal of an infused righteousness is for a person to become a pure, sinless saint and thus be qualified to enter heaven at death. Those who do not achieve sinless perfection must go to purgatory after death to eliminate their remaining sins before they are fit to enter heaven. In this system (where God does His part and man contributes his own merits) there can never be real peace with God or assurance of salvation. Why? Because, in the Romish system, man's faith is divided between an *insufficient* sacrifice and the supposed merits of sinful man. Buchanan says the papal church "did not recognize One only Mediator, and One only sacrifice for sin: it taught the merits and mediation of the saints, - the repetition of the one sacrifice on the Cross by the sacrifice on the Altar, - and addition satisfactions for sin in the austerities of penance, and the pains of purgatory. It made the pardon of sin dependent on the confession of the penitent and the absolution of the priest, - thereby placing the church in the room of Christ, and interposing the priest between the sinner and God: and when absolution was granted on condition of penance, or some other work of mere external obedience, it led men to look to something which they could themselves do or suffer, instead of relying by faith simply and solely on Christ and His finished work."⁶ The beauty and perfection of Christ's completed work are replaced by the filthy, stinking rags of human merit. Roman Catholicism offers a deadly mixture of faith and works in the matter of justification but labels this mixture "pure grace". One can label a bottle of deadly poison anything he wants to, but the contents remain the same. To offer up a system of salvation by works and excuse the whole thing by saying it all flows from grace is contradictory and deceptive. Paul says that as soon as works of any kind enter the picture, grace is no more grace. "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt" (Rom. 4:4). "You who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

One of the greatest achievements of Martin Luther was his rediscovery of the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. The Protestant Reformers pointed out (with *irrefutable*, exegetical argumentation) that the Romanist doctrine of justification contradicts the Scriptures in several areas. First, the biblical terms used to speak of justification, *dikaioo*, always means *to declare righteous* and never means to make righteous (see Lk. 7:29; 10:29; 16:15; Mt. 11:19; Rom. 3:4). Justification is a judicial, forensic term and is often contrasted in Scripture with judicial condemnation (see Dt. 25:1; Pr. 17:15; Isa. 5:23; Job 34:17). Second, when speaking of justification the Bible speaks of the *imputation* of righteousness and not the *infusion* of righteousness (see Rom.

sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and is inherent in them; or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is only the favor of God: let him be anathema" (*Trent*, 6th session, canon 11). "If anyone saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified, in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will: let him be anathema" (*Trent*, 6th session, canon 9).

⁶ James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977 [1867]), 125.

4:12, 22-24). Third, the Bible describes justification as something achieved in an instant of time. It is never described as a long process (see Jn. 5:24; Lk. 18:24; 23; 43; Rom. 5:1). Fourth, the Scriptures repeatedly declare that all that a person needs to be saved is to believe in Jesus Christ. “Everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Ac. 13:39; cf. Ac. 16:31; Jn. 3:15-16; 5:24; 11:25-26; Rom. 10:9; 1 Th. 4:14). Fifth, the apostle Paul says that God “justifies the ungodly” (Rom. 4:5). This proves that God does *not* justify people because they are personally righteous but because of the imputation of Christ’s perfect righteousness. Sixth, God’s word makes a clear distinction between justification and sanctification. “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). Justification deals with the guilt of sin and the merits needed for eternal life, while sanctification deals with the pollution of sin. Sanctification proves that a person has already been justified but does not contribute one iota to a person’s salvation. Seventh, the Bible teaches that the good works of believers are tainted with sin and are non-meritorious (Is. 64:6; Lk. 17:10; Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:15 ff.; Phil. 3:8-9). This side of heaven not one believer is without sin (1 Jn. 1:8). Eighth, the Scriptures say that *faith alone* is the instrument which appropriates Jesus Christ and His saving work (Rom. 3:22, 25-31; 4:5-25; 5:1, 18; 9:30-32; Gal. 2:16; 3:11-13, 24; 5:1-4). After one is justified, the sacraments and other means of grace are used in order to help the believer grow spiritually (i.e., for sanctification not for justification). Ninth, God’s word teaches that Jesus Christ actually accomplished a perfect redemption for His people, the elect (Mt. 1:21; Jn. 10:11-29; Ac. 20:28; Eph. 5:25-27). Romanism erroneously teaches that Christ merely made salvation a *possibility* if people cooperate with grace. But, as noted, such a view must presuppose that either Christ’s death was insufficient to save or that God is unjust by punishing the same sins twice. Both options are thoroughly unscriptural.

Roman Catholic View	Biblical View	Verse
Justification is God’s work of grace in man.	Justification is God’s work of grace in Jesus Christ.	“Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24 DB ⁷).
As a man, by grace, becomes more and more righteous by obeying God’s law, Church canon law, and the use of the sacraments, God will accept him.	God accepts men solely on the merits of Jesus Christ.	“For we account a man to be justified by faith, without the works of the law” (Rom. 3:20 DB).
Faith <i>and</i> good works are the basis for justification.	Faith in Christ <i>alone</i> is the basis for justification.	“By grace have ye been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of

⁷ DB=Douay Bible (1914). The Old Testament is the Douay version, the New Testament is the Confraternity edition; the complete Bible is commonly called the Douay Bible or Douay Version. Officially approved by the Roman Catholic Church.

		works, that no man should glory” (Eph. 2:8-9 DB).
God’s transforming grace <i>infuses</i> righteousness into men who cooperate with grace. Thus, justification is <i>subjective</i> .	The righteousness of Christ is <i>imputed</i> or credited to the believer through faith. Thus, justification is <i>objective</i> .	“When a man does nothing, yet believes in him who justifies the sinful, his faith is credited as justice...Blest is the man to whom the Lord imputes no guilt” (Rom. 4:4-8 NAB ⁸).

The Roman Catholic doctrine of justification is diametrically opposed to the biblical method of justifying sinners. It contradicts the experience of Abraham and the teachings of Jesus Christ and all the apostles. Therefore, the Protestant reformers opposed the papal doctrine with every fiber of their being. Also, the Reformed churches rightfully opposed the Romish heresy in all their confessions.

The fact that modern Evangelicals are united with papists in their love and advocacy of an unscriptural Romanist film is very disturbing. It means that not only is modern Evangelicalism grossly off course in the sphere of worship but also on the crucial doctrine of salvation. The doctrine of justification by faith that thundered from Wittenberg, Geneva and Edinburgh has been largely replaced in Evangelical circles with “accept Jesus as your personal Savior” or “let Jesus come into your heart”. The law-centered, forensic nature of the gospel has been displaced by an autonomous act of the human will that *lets* Jesus in the heart. According to modern Evangelicalism, God does His part and man does his. It is a cooperative effort between God and man (syncretism) in which man’s will plays the decisive role. (Evangelicalism today is semi-pelegian or Arminian.) Romanists and Evangelicals are in agreement that Jesus’ sacrificial death does *not* in and of itself have the power to save any particular individual unless the autonomous human will cooperates with grace and allows salvation to occur. The biblical view is that the death of Jesus is definitely efficacious for everyone for whom He died. Christ actually saves sinners. He did not simply open an opportunity for men to cooperate with a salvation process. Further, the modern Evangelical’s emphasis on allowing Jesus into the heart is fully compatible with the Romanist concept of an infused righteousness. Both focus a person’s faith on a subjective experience instead of the perfect objective obedience of Christ. The bottom line is that Romanism and Arminian Evangelicalism are first cousins theologically. Therefore, we should not be surprised to see Evangelicals praising and endorsing a Romanist movie project. Birds of a feather flock together.

As a hard core Romanist, Mel Gibson not only holds to a heretical doctrine of salvation but also to an idolatrous view of the virgin Mary. Gibson has allied himself with people in the papal church who believe Mary should be regarded as a co-mediatrix alongside of Jesus. Therefore, Mary is afforded a role in the film that goes beyond the text of Scripture. One reviewer says of Mary in the film, “She is presented as being Jesus’ support and strength during His trials. Many times Jesus falls and is unable to get up, but after looking at His mother He finds the strength to carry on. The disciples call Mary

⁸ NAB=New American Bible, New Testament (1970). Officially approved by the Roman Catholic Church.

‘mother’...The movie shows Mary as the suffering servant, suffering along with Jesus”.⁹ In other words, Gibson faithfully follows the Romanist concept of Mary as the co-mediatrix, the Queen of heaven.

A brief comparison between the biblical view of Mary and the Roman Catholic view will reveal the insidious doctrine behind Gibson’s portrayal of Jesus’ mother.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary was born without original sin (this doctrine is referred to as the Immaculate Conception). This teaching was set forth as an official doctrine of Papal church in a decree of Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854. Is this teaching found in Scripture? No! The Bible teaches that only Jesus Christ, the second Adam, was born without original sin (read Rom. 5:18; Heb. 4:15). Not only does God’s Word say that all human beings beside Jesus Christ are stained with original sin but also that everyone without exception has committed sins themselves. “Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12; cf. I Cor. 15:21-22).

In her desire to exalt Mary the Papal church also teaches that Mary never ever committed any actual sins. “The Catholic Church, an infallible interpreter of Holy Scripture, declares that she was kept sinless her life long by a special favor of God.”¹⁰ Note, once again, that Romanist teaching explicitly contradicts Scripture. The apostle John says that any person who claims to be without sin is a liar: “If we [professing Christians] say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 Jn 1:8)”. Paul concurs: “For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one’” (Rom. 3:9-10). Mary acknowledged her own guilt when she admitted her need of a Savior. “And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior’” (Lk. 1:46-47). Obviously, a person without sin does not need a savior.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches the perpetual virginity of Mary (i.e., She remained a virgin her entire life)¹¹. This doctrine came into the papal church because of

⁹Tim Challies, Internet Article, *Movie Review: The Passion of the Christ (Part Two)* found at <http://www.challies.com/archives/000195.html>

¹⁰Bertrand L. Conway, *The Question – Box Answers* (New York: Paulist, 1903), 377; cf. *Council of Trent*, 4th sess, can. 23.

¹¹Roman Catholic apologists have a few arguments they use to justify their position against the biblical evidence. First they argue that the Greek word for brother (*adelphos*) does not accurately convey the meaning of Jesus’ spoken words which were Aramaic. In Aramaic the word used for brother is not as specific as the Greek term and thus could mean cousin. This argument should be rejected because: (a) It is an argument from silence. Romanist apologists in this instance are guilty of inserting their own presuppositions (i.e., human traditions) back into what was supposedly said by Christ. To the Romanists we ask: Why not simply accept the plain words of Scripture at face value instead of looking to unsubstantiated speculation? (b) The Jews were comparing the miracle working Savior to His ordinary brothers in an attempt to question the validity of His ministry. It would have been absurd to compare Jesus with His cousins who had a different mother and who lived in a different household. Second, Papal apologists argue that Joseph already had children from a previous marriage when he married Mary. This argument also has serious problems. (a) There is not a shred of biblical evidence that Christ had any brothers or sisters when He was young. Once again we have an argument from silence. (b) Matthew, a Jew writing to a Jewish audience, refers to our Lord as Mary’s *firstborn son*. This expression was used by Jews if other children were born after the first one; otherwise, “only son” would have been used.

Further, the Bible teaches that marriage and celibacy are not to be combined. For Mary to remain a virgin her whole life, after the birth of Christ, she would have had to disobey the clear teaching of

the influence of Greek philosophy on Christian theology. This influence led to various forms of asceticism; the exaltation of celibacy over the estate of marriage and the totally unbiblical idea that even lawful sexual relations in marriage were somehow inherently degrading and sinful. While the Bible explicitly teaches that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was born (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:18-20, 23, 25; Lk. 1:26-27, 35), it plainly says that *after* the birth of our Lord Mary had other children. Matthew even tells us their names. “Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us?” (Mt. 13:55-56). Luke concurs: “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (Ac. 1:14).

The latest official addition to the Roman Catholic Church’s idolatrous redefinition of Jesus’ mother is the doctrine of the bodily assumption of Mary. This teaching was made an official part of Roman Catholic dogma by Pope Pius XII in 1950. According to this doctrine Mary was miraculously taken to heaven by Jesus and therefore never had to suffer the sting of death or bodily corruption. This dogma is the logical correlation to the false papist idea that Mary never had original or actual sin. (Obviously if Mary was without sin in every way then there was no reason for her to die.) What can be said regarding this teaching? Is it biblical? No! Once again the Romanist Church has fabricated human traditions regarding Mary that have absolutely no support from Scripture. If something as miraculous and unusual as a person ascending directly to heaven without death occurred, would it not be mentioned in God’s Word? Yet, the New Testament says absolutely nothing about such an event. Further, would not such an event have at least made a strong impact on the early church? Yet, in the first three centuries after the birth of the church there is not one reference to the assumption of Mary. Obviously, this doctrine, just like all the other Papist additions to Scripture was a human tradition. It arose because of superstitious, idolatrous views of Christ’s mother.

The Papal church encourages her members to venerate (i.e., worship) Mary and to pray to her (see the Council of Trent, 25th sess.). The Bible teaches that such behavior is rank idolatry and is blasphemous. Scripture teaches that there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5). Only someone who is God, who is omnipresent and omniscient, can simultaneously hear the prayers of millions of people all over the earth. The Romanist exaltation of Mary detracts from the glory and the honor that is due to Christ alone. Mary would be horrified to see the many deluded souls who are bowing and praying to her when they ought to be worshipping and serving Jesus alone (cf. Ex.20:4-5; Ac. 10:25-26; Rev. 19:10).

It is interesting to note that although the gospels speak of Mary as greatly blessed of God because she is the God-bearer, the mother of the Messiah, they also clearly teach that she had no special role in the apostolic church at all. She was a regular member along with her believing children in the local church at Jerusalem. In the New Testament *never*

Scripture, which a godly woman like Mary would have refused to do. “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1 Cor. 7:2-5). The apostle Paul rejected papal pagan ascetic nonsense when he declared that “the marriage bed is undefiled” (Heb. 13:4).

do we find anyone praying to Mary, asking her for advice, offering her special honors or any such thing. In fact, once her God-given task of rearing Jesus is completed Mary completely fades into the background.

There are only five references to Mary in the New Testament after the beginning of Christ's ministry, none of which afford her a special role.

(a) Mary was present at the wedding feast in Cana where Jesus and His disciples were guests. Commentators believe Mary had some responsibility for helping with the party because she informs Jesus of the problem of the gathering running out of wine. Our Lord responded, saying, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come" (Jn. 2:4). Note that Christ respectfully asserts His independence of His mother; He calls her woman and not mother; and His answer implies that she has no right to determine the when, where, and how of His mission. Mary accepted her proper role, submitted to her Son and told the servants to obey whatever Jesus commanded (Jn. 2:5).

(b) We next encounter Mary attempting to speak to Christ while He was teaching a large gathering that filled a house. "While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You'. But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.'" (Mt.12:46-50; cf. Mk. 3:31-35; Lk. 8:19-21). This narrative teaches us the following: First, Our Lord essentially ignores Mary and His brothers' request. His answer indicates that He will not allow Himself to be interrupted from His task of preaching. If Mary was the queen of heaven, the co-mediatrix along side of the Savior, such a response was totally inappropriate. Second, Jesus indicates that faith is more important than even blood; that spiritual ties are more important than even one's own physical family. Keep in mind that at this time Christ's brothers did not yet understand who our Lord was. Mary may not have even fully comprehended Him yet. Third, the Messiah declares that all His true disciples are worthy of the title: mother, brothers and sisters. Jesus was born of a woman, under the law to establish a spiritual family. The exaltation of His physical family to some unique exalted place in the kingdom by the Romish church clearly contradicts the Savior's own words. (The Roman Catholic Church which this author attended as a little boy had a large statue of Mary on one side of the front of the church and a large statue of Joseph on the other. Behind the "altar" was a five foot tall painted crucifix.)

(c) The next mention of Mary is an indirect reference. Luke 11:27-28 reads, "And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!' But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" In this passage Jesus does not say that the woman's comments regarding His own mother are wrong for the Bible does say that Mary was blessed (Lk. 1:42, 48).¹²

¹² When the birth narratives speak of Mary as highly favored by God (Lk. 1:28) or blessed by God (Lk. 1:42) the point is *not* that Mary is someone intrinsically great who has done works of supererogation and thus merits our worship; but rather that God has *sovereignly chosen her* for the special task of giving birth to the Messiah – the Son of God. Mary was a godly woman who gave birth to Jesus. However, her role in redemptive history was interchangeable with hundreds of other godly women. Like the great Protestant

However, our Lord's reaction to the woman's statement is a direct refutation to the veneration of Mary. Why? Because *everyone* who believes in and thus obeys God's word has a greater blessing than even giving birth to the Messiah. Like the previous verse, this passage teaches that the all-important thing in life is not a physical relation but a spiritual union with the Savior. In our Lord's ministry He goes out of His way to suppress superstitious ideas that exalt His earthly mother by teaching that all who truly believe in Him receive the same blessing and have the same spiritual standing. There is no room in Christ's theology for saint worshipping or Mariolatry.

(d) The final appearance of Mary in the gospels is at the crucifixion of Christ. "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother.' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home" (Jn. 19:25-27). There are a number of interesting things to note regarding this section of Scripture.

First, note that our Lord fulfilled His moral obligation as the first born to care for His mother in her aged years. With His death imminent He passed the responsibility on to his closest friend, the godly apostle John. From this account we can surmise that Joseph had passed away and that Christ's brothers were not yet converted. If they were, the responsibility for Mary would have fallen on them.

Second, note that John (along with the church) is to take care of Mary and not the other way around. If the Roman Catholic position on Mary were true we could reasonably expect to see the apostles and the presbyters going to Mary for direction and the special mediation to Christ and the Father that supposedly she could provide. Such, of course, is not the case. Mary was a regular church member just like everyone else. As a woman, she had no position of leadership or authority in the church (1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:12).

(e) The last mention of Mary in Scripture is found in Acts 1:14, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." In this passage we learn the following: Mary was active at this time in the church at Jerusalem. She was with the 120 when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas and during the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Ac. 2:1 ff.). Also, at this point in time Jesus' brothers (who earlier in the gospel accounts were presented as unbelieving) are active members of the church.

Once again note that after the beginning of His official ministry Jesus refers to Mary as "woman" not "my mother" (Jn. 2:4). Our Lord taught specifically that union with Christ and the spiritual relations that are a result of salvation are far more important than blood relations (Mt. 12:46-50). Mary had no special authority in the church, but was a regular church member just like everyone else (Ac. 1:14; 1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11ff.). In fact, Mary is scarcely mentioned after the birth narratives and is never mentioned in the epistles. When discussing the incarnation Paul simply says, "...born of a woman, born under the law" (Gal. 4:4). Mary is blessed among women, not blessed over women (Lk. 1:42). There is not a shred of evidence in Scripture for the special status of Mary in

Reformers (Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox), Mary's focus was not on herself or her own merit or righteousness but on the Lord Jesus Christ. Roman Catholics should obey Mary's words, "Whatever He [Jesus] says, do it" (Jn. 2:5) and not the lies of Romanism.

Roman Catholic dogma. The papal worship of Jesus' mother has more in common with the ancient Middle Eastern fertility cults than it does with the Bible.

In order to understand the extent to which Roman Catholic teaching concerning Mary has departed from the Scriptures, Dr. Joseph Zacchello has placed Roman Catholic teaching on Mary in one column and the Word of God in another column. The Roman Catholic teaching is from *The Glories of Mary* by Bishop Alphonse de Ligouri (Brooklyn: Redemptorist Fathers, 1931). The Bible quotations are from the Douay Bible.

Mary is given the place belonging to Christ	
<p>Roman Catholic Church: “And she is truly a mediatrix of peace between sinners and God. Sinners receive pardon by...Mary alone” (pp. 82-83). “Mary is our life...Mary in obtaining this grace for sinners by her intercession, thus restores them to life” (p. 80). “He fails and is <i>lost</i> who has not recourse to Mary” (p. 94).</p>	<p>The Word of God: “For there is one God, and <i>one</i> Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). “Jesus saith to him: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me” (Jn. 14:6). “Christ...is our life” (Col. 4:4).</p>
Mary is glorified more than Christ	
<p>Roman Catholic Church: “The Holy Church commands a <i>worship</i> peculiar to Mary (p. 130). Many things...are asked from God, and are not granted; they are asked from Mary, and are obtained, for She...is even Queen of Hell, and Sovereign Mistress of the Devils” (pp. 127, 141, 143).</p>	<p>The Word of God: “In the Name of Jesus Christ...For there is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved” (Ac. 3:6, 4:12). “His Name is above every name...not only in this world, but also in the world which is to come” (Eph. 1:21).</p>
Mary is the gate to heaven instead of Christ	
<p>Roman Catholic Church: “Mary is called...the gate of heaven because no one can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through <i>her</i> (p. 160). The way of salvation is open to none otherwise than through Mary, and since our salvation is in the hands of Mary...he who is protected by Mary will be saved, he who is not will be lost” (pp. 169-170).</p>	<p>The Word of God: “I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (Jn. 10:1). “Jesus saith to him, ‘I am the way...no man cometh to the Father but by me’” (Jn. 14:6). “Neither is there salvation in any other [than in Jesus Christ]” (Ac 4:12).</p>
Mary is given the power of Christ	
<p>Roman Catholic Church: “All power is given to thee in Heaven and on earth, so that at the command of Mary all obey – <i>even God</i>...and thus...God has placed the whole Church...under the</p>	<p>The Word of God: “All power is given to me in Heaven and in earth” (Mt. 28:18). “In the Name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Phil. 2:9-11). “That in all things He may hold the</p>

dominion of Mary” (pp. 180-181). “Mary is also the Advocate of the whole human race...for she can do what she wills with God” (p. 193).	primacy” (Col. 1:18). “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just: and he is the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 2:1-2).
Mary is the peacemaker instead of Jesus Christ our peace	
Roman Catholic Church: “Mary is the Peace-maker between sinners and God” (p. 197). “We often more quickly obtain what we ask by calling on the name of Mary than by invoking that of Jesus. She...is our Salvation, our Life, our Hope, our Counsel, our Refuge, our Help” (pp.254, 257).	The Word of God: “But now in Christ Jesus, you, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace...” (Eph. 2:13, 14). “Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive, for whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us” (Jn. 16:23, 24).
Mary is given the glory that belongs to Christ alone	
Roman Catholic Church: “The whole Trinity, O Mary, gave thee a name...above every name, that at Thy name, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth” (p. 260).	The Word of God: “God also hath highly exalted <i>Him</i> , and hath given <i>Him</i> a Name which is above all names, that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth” (Phil. 2:9, 10).

Liguori, more than any other person, has been responsible for promoting Mariolatry in the Roman Church, dethroning Christ and enthroning Mary in the hearts of the people. Yet instead of excommunicating him for his heresies, the Roman Church has canonized him as a saint and published his book in many editions (recently under the imprimatur of Cardinal Patrick Joseph Hays of New York).¹³

After a brief examination of the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching on salvation and on Mary – the mother of Jesus – it is obvious that the papal church is apostate, heretical and spiritually very dangerous. It has more in common with an idolatrous cult than with the bride of Christ. This cesspool of heresy and idolatry is the theological presupposition behind Mel Gibson’s movie. The fact that evangelical leaders and pastors have vigorously endorsed this film reveals almost a complete lack of spiritual discernment and theological acumen on their part. Now that you have read this monograph on *The Passion*, it is your duty to warn others about the dangers of Roman Catholicism and point everyone to the true meaning of the person and work of Jesus Christ. May God enable you by the power of the Holy Spirit to behold the precious Savior with the eyes of faith. Amen. “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

¹³ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Phillipsburg, NJ; Presbyterian and Reformed), 138-140.