

The Holy Catholic Church

(Which Church is the right Church?)

by Gary T. Panell

There are so many different denominations in the world, people ask, "Which is the right church?" Many churches claim they are the only right church, so how is a person to know?

The Bible makes it clear, in [Ephesians 4:4-6](#), that there is really only one true Church: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all."

Yes, there are many different names for the churches, but the fact remains the Bible teaches that there is only one Church! The Church is universal, and that is what the Word "Catholic" means. The dictionary states it this way, "of broad or general scope; universal; all-inclusive, of or pertaining to the universal Christian church, of or pertaining to the ancient undivided Christian church."

Whether we know it or not, ALL "[born again](#)" Christians are in The HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH (I am not speaking of the Roman Catholic Church here, but of the [invisible Body of believers](#)). The Church is bigger than any one denomination. It is bigger than the Roman Catholic Church, it is bigger than the Orthodox Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, Presbyterian Church or whatever other church denomination you can think of.

Paul says, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in, 1 Corinthians 1:11-13, "For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" You see even in Paul's time, at the beginning of the Church, people claimed one man's teaching over another, some even going so far as to say, "we are of Christ," indicating they were the only right ones.

Do you hear people today saying we are of John Wesley, of John Calvin, of Martin Luther, of E. G. White or of some other man or woman. Do you think this makes God happy? God may permit the Church to be divided up like this for awhile, but we will see later how this will not continue for long.

First let's see how we get into "The Holy Catholic Church." When we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior we are baptized by the Spirit of God into one body, "The Church." I Corinthians 12:12,13 says, "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into

one body-whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. When we receive Christ as our LORD and Savior we are baptized by the Holy Spirit of God into one body, The Holy Catholic Church. This passage is not to be confused with the filling or baptism of the Holy Spirit found in Acts and Ephesians 5:18.

The Christian at the moment of conversion is brought into the body of Christ. That means that all saints from the day of Pentecost until God calls the Church, His Bride, home to be with Him are in this one body. Some believers are on this earth and some are in heaven but they too are in the body, the Church.

What are we to make of the fact that there are so many different Christian denominations at this time? First, it is not always wrong to be different, sometimes it is good to be different. Look at 1 Corinthians 12: 1-6, where it says, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all." God has made us different, but part of the same body, just like our bodies have many different parts for different purposes.

Look at some more verses from this chapter, 1 Corinthians 12:14-20, "For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body."

Please don't go on thinking your church is the only right church. I have had the privilege of attending many different denominations and I can fellowship with these Christians because we have the same LORD, and the same FATHER, and the same HOLY SPIRIT, and the same BAPTISM. That's because we are in the same universal Church, The Holy Catholic Church. I know some Christians will take what I am teaching and will confuse it with "One World Church" or "One World Religion."

Let me make it perfectly clear I am not talking about these two organizations! No, I am not talking about a church that is united to nonbelievers. Nor am I talking about uniting with false cults such as the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or the Bahá'í Cult. Watch out for this last group especially, the Bahá'í Faith, it was founded in 1863 in Iran and emphasizes the spiritual unity of all mankind. There will be those who will try to find some common ground between Islam and Christianity, as well as other religions, so they will flock to the Bahá'í Faith, New Age, or a similar cult (to form a one world religion).

I believe we are not pleasing God when we are fighting with those who are different from us, but are "born again" Christians. That does not mean we all have to go to the same denomination to get along with our brothers and sisters in Christ. However, it does mean trying to understand one

another, major on the major beliefs that unite us and not on the minor things that divide us. I have talked to Roman Catholic children who do not know they are called Christians. They think of themselves only as Roman Catholics.

I have news for Roman Catholics that are trusting in the blood of Christ to save you, you are part of the body of Christ. I know Evangelicals that believe no Roman Catholics can be saved. What a surprise you both have coming for you, if you are truly saved, you will stand around the throne of God together. Remember, 1 Corinthians 12:3, assures us, "Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." I know Pentecostals that believe a person is not saved unless they speak in tongues. I know Baptists that believe if you speak in tongues you are not saved.

There are Christians who say, "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean." These verses are found in 2 Corinthians 6: 14-18, but look at what these verses are really talking about. They are not saying, don't have fellowship with Christians that are different from you. These verses are saying just the opposite, stay away from idol worshipers, and as verse 14 makes very clear, "don't be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." What do you think, that in heaven there is one section for born again Roman Catholics, one section for born again Baptists.

How "petty" we can be, how wrong we can be! There are many divisions in the Church today, but nothing Jesus, our Head, cannot change. You may believe you can lose your salvation, and so you can't fellowship with those who don't believe they can lose their salvation. You may be Pentecostal and think you cannot fellowship with a person who is not Pentecostal, but Jesus Christ our LORD and Savior is bigger than this difference. On, and on, the list of differences could go, but Jesus is able to change all of this, and I believe He will soon, because of what He prayed in John 17. This prayer of His will be answered by the Father, and revival will break out, "praise God."

You say, but you do not know church history, there was so much fighting and killing over so many differences. Yes, I know about this, the world knows about this, but God also knows about this, and wants us to forgive each other. Before you dismiss what I am saying as heresy, will you pray about it. Will you truly seek God's face, and see if God is speaking to you about past prejudices against other Christians in other denominations other than your own?

If you are not truly saved, you will not be in heaven with anyone. It is not enough to be baptized, it is not enough to go to church, it is not enough to do good works, Jesus said you must be born again. I know some church goers find it hard to believe that Jesus is the one who said, "you must be born again" but if you haven't read, John 3:3-7 lately, this is exactly what Jesus did say. He was talking to a religious leader named Nicodemus: Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again."

Will the Church always be divided up into various denominations? Probably it will, however, there is coming a time in the future when these differences in names will not mean as much. A

Roman Catholic Priest spoke on the radio one day to the Christians in the United States. He had just come from ministering in the Sudan. He said when persecution hit, the true Christians united. Their name differences didn't mean anything anymore. The only thing that mattered was that they were fellow brothers and sisters in Christ!

Do you believe Jesus' prayers will be answered? Then you better get ready for true Christians to unite. You might say, "But this will not happen until we get to Heaven," but Jesus prayer of John 17 will be answered before Jesus comes back for the Church. You who call yourselves fundamentalists (which group I would be in) don't stop reading at this point, listen to what Jesus prayed in John 17: 6-20, right before his crucifixion: "I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of this world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

"And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." When Christians realize the importance of this prayer of Jesus, multitudes will be saved seeing the love Christians have for each other!

Will there be a "falling away" from this true Church in the "last days?" Yes, I believe it is already happening, with the recent ordination of practicing homosexual pastors. 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 warns, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron." 2 Timothy 3:1-5 "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

These people say we don't have to obey the Bible because it is not true anyway. We can ordain practicing [homosexuals](#), who cares what God says. You see God is allowing those who claim to be Christians, but are not really in the Church, to show their true colors. Persecution will also cause some to deny the Lord, 2 Timothy 4: 1-5, "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."

Jude 3, 4, "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

In spite of this "[falling away](#)" Jesus will come back for a pure bride: "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:23-27).

Christ will come for His Holy Catholic Church one day, are you in this one true Church? You see, there is only one Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ and He is head of the Church. The local churches are only part of the whole. Then too, only those in the local churches that are saved are [going to Heaven](#). Are you saved? Do you want to be saved? If so, ask Jesus right now to forgive you for your sins and to come into your heart and life. If you have done this you are now baptized into the Holy Catholic Church. Welcome, I will see you in heaven one day, brother or sister in Christ. (All references are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.)