

# The BEACON

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## The Mystery of Iniquity Continued - by Eugene Britnell

**Paragraph 4:** Our teachings are much more than "a little more" distinctive from regular Protestantism. There's hardly any similarity! We do not regard the church as being ours, but we do believe that the saved of earth now are in the church or body which is of Christ. Who would dare deny that? And why would they complain about that since they teach the same thing, that is, they teach that salvation is only in the Catholic Church. The Bible says that the Lord adds the saved to the church (**Acts 2:47**) and that Christ is the saviour of the body, the church (**Eph. 1:22,23; 5:23**). How could one be saved outside that body of the saved? No, salvation does not come through faith alone (**James 2:24**). We are saved by grace through faith which works (**Gal. 5:6**). The only "good works" in God's sight are works of faith—obedience to the commandments of the Lord. We deny the charge that we make "violent attacks" on the Catholic Church. We attack their doctrine and practices because they did originate in apostasy (**2 Thess. 2; I Tim. 4:1-3**) and are perpetuated by tradition. Yes, we believe in religious debate and argument as did the early Christians, but we debate with real opponents who are allowed to represent themselves. We don't place "great emphasis" upon the fact that we wear the name "church of Christ." but we do believe in calling Bible things by Bible names and that nothing is scriptural in name that is not named in the scriptures. Inspired men called congregations "churches of Christ" (**Rom. 16:16**), so why can't we? They never mentioned any Catholic Churches! He is correct in saying that the Lord's church has no particular name which excludes all others, if by "all others" he means other terms,

designations or descriptive phrases in the New Testament. We call the church anything and everything the scriptures call it— but nothing else! But again, why do they complain? They teach that the Catholic Church is the church of Christ. We challenge them to deny it.

**Paragraph 5:** It is incorrect to say that the church of Christ "broke away" from the Disciples of Christ. If anything, the converse of that is true. Neither the church of Christ or Disciples of Christ was founded by Alexander Campbell. There was division in the church over (as he later says) instrumental music and missionary societies. The church of Christ was listed in the 1906 census of religious bodies because that was the first such publication. A monument now stands in the Cane Ridge Cemetery near Paris, Ky. which states that the one buried there was united with the church of Christ in 1827. How could that be if the church of Christ goes back only to about 1906? And we are certain that his quote from David Lipscomb is a misunderstanding of what he meant. Brother Lipscomb knew the truth about the church and the division.

**Paragraph 6:** He is partially right in attributing the division to instruments and societies. The real cause of the division was the same as that which has always separated the true church from all others and truth from error—**attitude** toward divine authority! Organs and societies were only tangible effects of the cause. He implies that the "frontier" churches in America did not use organs because they could not afford to purchase them. How absurd! I suppose the Christians of those days were as prosperous as the members of many denominations, and they could

and did afford to buy organs. If the churches of Christ had wanted instruments, they might have been able to purchase them like many other religious bodies did and do, by some money-making scheme such as bingo. He says that when they were able to afford them, many conservatives objected because they believed them to be unscriptural. That's right, and they still do.

**Paragraph 7:** He says, "This church is a reaction against much of the Protestant liberalism that is so prevalent today, the believe-what-you-want-to, one religion- is-as-good-as-another school of Protestant theology that has watered down Protestantism so much that it is almost impossible to discover what Protestant churches actually believe and teach." We do stand in opposition to the teaching that one may believe whatever he wishes and that one religion is as good as another. It is true that these ideas have so "watered down" or diluted the denominations until they have no power or consistency because they have no truth. But our answer is not, as he contended, that we say "here is what you must believe and do, because we are the true church ..." What we teach and encourage people to do is that which is taught in the word of God, the Bible. One doesn't have to believe or obey anything because "the church of Christ believes it," and the same is true of the Catholic Church.

**Paragraph 8:** One characteristic of the Lord's church is that it is truly catholic, the saved of the earth, but that is not spelled with a capital "c" as they have it. The church is universal in nature, but that's not its name. We believe that "all types of people" are in the universal church as described by Paul in **Galatians 3:28**. This includes all who by faith (their own) have been baptized into Christ (**Gal. 3:26, 27**).

**Paragraph 9:** We have not been as loud in our opposition to Catholicism as we should have been. Yes, there was a confrontation between the Catholic Church and the church of Christ in Italy years ago. They even defaced and removed some of the signs from our meeting places. We would probably have

the same kind of opposition in America if Catholicism had the power and influence here that it has in Italy. Our opposition to Catholicism is doctrinal and spiritual in nature, for "we wrestle not against flesh and blood," but against powers, rulers of darkness and spiritual wickedness (**Eph. 6:12**). We do not deny Catholics (or anyone else) the right to erect and maintain places of worship, nor to believe and practice anything they desire. It is easy for us to understand why we would have controversy with Catholicism while "protestant denominations have lived in peace" with them for years. Protestant denominations cannot say that anything or anyone is wrong for they have taught for years that one church is as good as another. In addition, they borrowed many of their practices from Rome, and "people in glass houses should not throw rocks." We oppose Catholicism (not Catholics) by every means and medium available to us. I presented recently a series of five thirty-minute lessons on "Was Peter Pope?" on a 50,000 watt radio station. We offered free time to any representative spokesman of the Catholic Church to reply, but there was no response from them.

**Paragraph 10:** We vehemently deny that we have displayed bitterness toward the Catholic Church — at least those connected with this paper endorse no such attitudes. We endeavor to "speak the truth in love" (**Eph. 4:15**), but when that truth cannot be refuted the next best thing is to impugn our motives. It is true that there is no "direct, historical connection" between the church of Christ and the Catholic Church — and for that we are profoundly thankful! "Rev." Kelly says that the Catholic Church is "a living, historical refutation of all their claims." We challenge any Catholic to name one thing which we teach or practice which has been or can be refuted by the Catholic Church, using the Bible as the standard.

**Paragraph 11:** Here he calls attention to division in the church of Christ over Sunday schools, but such is minimal and of little significance. He says that we emphasize "congregational character" and have no

conventions, "although 'Lectureships' take their place." The organization or government of the church is congregation rather than universal; but we need to define what is meant by "conventions" and "lectureships." We normally think of religious conventions as law-making bodies, and of course the church of Christ has no such nor is such needed. Christ is our head and lawgiver (**James 4:12**) and His will is revealed in the New Testament, not some convention. As for "lectureships," sometimes a series of protracted meetings is called that — and that's all right. The colleges operated by Christians have annual lessons called "lectureships" but they are separate and apart from the church — or at least should be. He says that our popularity with other protestant bodies is not high. That's true, and so long as we preach the truth we cannot anticipate an increase in ratings. Our brethren of the first century didn't rate too highly with others and were "the Way which they call a sect" (**Acts 24:14 NKJ**), and "every where spoken against" (**Acts 28:22**). He said that due to our "private interpretation" of the Bible we believe that our interpretation is the only correct one. Well, the Bible teaches the principle of private or individual interpretation and that the average person who is seeking for truth can understand. "The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (**Psalms 119:130**). The correct interpretation of the Bible is to believe what it says (e.g., the seven "ones" of **Ephesians 4:4-6**), and that is where we invite all others to join us. **Paragraph 12:** In this paragraph he accuses us of "picking over small points and ignoring some of the cardinal points of the Christian Faith," but he failed to give an example of those points. By "Christian Faith" we're sure he refers to the Catholic faith, and we plead guilty to ignoring the cardinal doctrines of that system. But we observe, teach and defend the cardinal doctrines of the faith once delivered to the saints (**Jude 3**). We regret and resent his sarcastic and blasphemous statement that we make "religion something buried in a book," meaning the Bible. In speaking of the Bible, Catholics speak with forked

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tongue. On one hand, they claim to have given us the Bible, and on the other hand they deny its authority, challenge its simplicity, and question its adequacy. He charges that we "ignore the authority and tradition of the Catholic Church." We certainly do! Christ has all authority (**Matt. 17:5; 28:18**) and He has not delegated any authority even to His own body or church, much less the Catholic Church. And tradition doesn't teach or authorize anything as being the will of the Lord (**Mark 7:9**).

**Paragraph 13:** He closes by complimenting us on our zeal, learning our doctrine, and winning converts. Many of us do not deserve these compliments. If we were really doing these things as we should, there would be fewer servants of the pope and more servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Catholic friend closed by saying, "Catholics should pray for them that they will find the true 'Church of Christ'." If we have not found the "true church of Christ," and should find it, should we then call it the Catholic Church? If so, why? In our review of this criticism of the church of Christ, we have endeavored to "speak the truth in love" yet plainly so that we are understood. We urge our Catholic friends to give careful and honest consideration to what has been said, and "search the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were (are) so" (**Acts 17:11**).

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#### NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

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