

Minister's Message – November 2010

Saint Mary?

Australia has its first saint. Is this really true? It depends on how we define 'saint'. Since it is the Roman Catholic Church that is posthumously conferring this honour on Mary McKillop we might assume the definition can be found in the Bible. When we open the Bible we find the word 'saint' and related words over a hundred times. In the Greek New Testament the word is 'hagios' which means 'holy one'. A 'saint' is a 'holy one'. So far so good since the Roman Catholic Church accepts this.

This Church claims that Mary McKillop was, and/or is, a holy person. This claim is based in part on her good work of helping poor children in country areas of Australia. No one denies the good work that Mary did, although she is not alone in doing such good work. If good work qualifies a person to be a saint then there are many such saints.

But does the word 'saint' in the Bible mean one who does good work? How does a person become a 'holy one' according to the Bible? God is holy and Jesus is holy so a holy person is somehow like God. How a sinful human being become like God? Is it by doing good works or even by doing a couple of miracles as is claimed for Mary? Not according to the Bible. *No one will be declared righteous in his (God's) sight by keeping the law (or doing good works) (Romans 3:20). By grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).*

To be a saint your sin must have their sin forgiven. Only God and his Son Jesus can forgive sin. Only God can declare anyone a saint. God declares saints on the basis of divine election, calling a person to faith in Jesus Christ. Saints are people who believe in Jesus Christ – no miracles are required. Saints are people God has adopted into his family.

Is Mary McKillop a saint by this Biblical definition? Only God knows what was in her heart. And if she is a saint God would have declared her so while she lived. No one becomes a saint after they die. The Roman Catholic Church is actually doing this woman a great dishonour if she truly is a saint. Not only is a mere man declaring her to be a saint but he is doing it a hundred years after she died! It is 'unholy' presumption on the part of the Pope in Rome to be conferring sainthood on anyone. It is an affront to the holy God and Jesus the Son of God.

The whole matter of praying to Mary and claiming miraculous cures on the basis of these prayers is another affront to God and completely contrary to the teaching of the Bible. If anyone has been wonderfully healed by God, and we do not deny the power of God to heal, then we must give him all the glory. *I will not give my glory to another* God says (Isaiah 48:11). Any true saint of God must condemn the practice of praying Mary, or any other so called saint – see I Timothy 2:5, John 14:14, and Revelation 22:9-10.

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