

CHRIST'S COMMENTARY ON CHURCH HISTORY
"Thyatira: God's Directives Regarding Roman Catholicism"
(Revelation 2:18-29)

Introduction: (To show the need...)

(1) Perhaps close to half of those who are members of Nepaug Church have come from a Roman Catholic background. We realize that salvation is by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. We love to quote Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." To us it is a great relief to find that salvation does not depend on keeping ecclesiastical sacraments, but upon God's faithfulness to His own promises concerning our welfare!

Cooperate with Catholics:

(a) The Associated Press reports that Archbishop Robert Runcie, the head of the Anglican church, has called for "all Christians to accept the pope as a common leader 'presiding in love.'"

(b) Even Evangelical leaders are involved in urging Christians to fellowship with Rome. AP reporter David Briggs wrote recently that "leading Catholics and Evangelicals are asking their flocks for a remarkable leap of faith: to finally accept each other as Christians...They urged Catholics and evangelicals to no longer hold each other at arm's length and to stop aggressive proselytization of each other's flocks..."

(3) Missionary Frank Hartwig with ABWE writes of changes in Vatican II's Synod that seem to improve Catholicism's stand: (p. 22) (a) the mass can be in the vernacular of the laity and not in Latin; (b) Bible reading is to be encouraged by the laity and priests alike; and (c) Protestants are no longer to be viewed apostates and heretics, but separated brethren or just brethren in Christ!

As well as the **Evangelical** way!!

Well, are Nepaugers **now supposed to cooperate with Catholics?!** (We turn to the "Need" section of the message...)

***Need: "I used to be Roman Catholic, but some Christians push cooperation with Catholics. Well, would Christ push cooperation?!* Does Vatican II change things enough for Evangelicals to work with Catholics? We have friends still in Catholicism, so I need to know!"**

- I. **As we learned in previous messages, Revelation 2-3 contains Christ's comments for the welfare of Christians in Church History.**
- II. **Christ's message to Believers in the Church of Thyatira reveals His guidance for Christians with Roman Catholic heritage:**
 - A. The name "Thyatira" means "citadel of sacrifice," portraying the doctrine of Christ's perpetual sacrifice unique to Catholicism.
 - B. Christ's words to Thyatira display His guidance for Catholics :
 1. **Regarding commitment and work, the Thyatirans received Christ's approval.** Indeed, **later** works (Vatican II) **excel former** ones (*pleion(a)*) as used in Rv. 2:19 and Mtt. 5:20)!!
 2. **HOWEVER**, Jesus **opposed** Thyatira's **tolerating** a "prophetess, Jezebel" in the Church, 20. We decode this symbolism as follows :
 - a. Ishtar, Nimrud's wife became pregnant via adultery with Tamuz.
 - b. To conceal her sin, Ishtar claimed that her son, Tamuz was conceived by a miracle, and started her own 'self-help' cult.
 - c. This false belief drifted into O. T. Baal worship (which Jezebel promoted) and then on to Rome in Constantine's day. There, pagan priests infiltrating the Church found a "match" in the Mary-Jesus motif with Ishtar's mother-child cult. They mingled ideas to push their cult, Boettner, Rom. Cath., p. 136.
 3. These cultists promoted paganism in the Church as follows:
 - a. Spiritual "fornication" in Scripture is often idolatry, cf. Hosea 2:1-13. This pictures the undue elevation of Mary.
 - b. The "eating of things sacrificed to idols" reveals God's opposition to **paganistic transubstantiation**. Here, communion elements **become** Christ, a form of idolatry!

4. Christ pictured Himself as the Son of God opposite "Son of **Man**" in Rv. 1:13 (v. 18). Accordingly, believers in this era needed to exalt Christ's divine origin as **opposed** to false Mother-Child doctrine! His eyes perceive and His legs are of bronze, a picture of discerning judgment, cf. Nu. 16; Dn. 10:6. Failure for the Thyatirans to repent from idolatry meant divine judgment!
- C. The remaining symbols in Christ's message to Thyatira display Christ's dealings with the Roman Catholic Church:
1. God gave time for pagan error to leave, but to no avail, v. 21.
 2. As a result, Jesus announced great tribulation, a picture of Europe's devastating bubonic plague! (22f)
 3. Christ had a special word to the "rest" in v. 23: this speaks of a **remnant** of believers living amongst unbelievers! Since the former were not into "Satan's depths," Christ would not add **burdens** to them. Decoded, this means that cult legalism (man-made rules) had risen through Ishtar's self-help paganism **blending** with the **hard work** of believers in Thyatira, v. 19. Hence, Christ would not add more legalistic burdens (cf. Mtt. 11:28-30 with Pharisaism in Christ's era). Instead, He asked believers to sustain their beliefs on grace, 25 & "II, B, 3-4."
 4. Overcomers would (a) rule over the nations to shatter them and (b) receive the "Morning Star" to start new eras as follows: (v. 26-28)
 - a. When the Reformers advanced salvation by faith alone and authority via the Scriptures alone and the sole Lordship of Christ, the Europe's national boundaries shattered for the next 100 years, Augsburg Hist. Atlas, p. 35-45.
 - b. The writings of Luther and Calvin affected language solidification and governmental organization for ages to come!

Application: *If we are Catholic in heritage, God directs us to (1) believe alone on Christ alone for salvation, Jn. 3:16; Ep. 2:8-9. (2) As a believer, we must live by grace, Gal. 2:19-20. (a) This means handling sin by confession to God alone (1 Jn. 1:9; 1 Tim. 2:5) and (b) relying on the Spirit for power to live instead of leaning on rituals, Gal. 5:1-23. (3) We must be tactful in discipling those of Catholic origins: since their heritage is paganistic legalism, but they are devoted to "God," (a) honor their devotion (cf. Rv. 2:19) (b) but reveal that Scripture teaches grace to be the only way to please God! (c) Since believers in Catholicism are a "remnant" amongst unbelievers, they should withdraw ties rather than unite with Romanism, Rv. 18:4; 2 C. 6:14-7:1. Jesus teaches that Vatican II does not remove paganism from Catholicism (Rev. 2:19b-25); neither should we fellowship with Rome!*

Lesson: *People with Roman Catholic heritage have been seduced by paganism unto a life of legalistic bondage; Christ directs them unto salvation and living by God's grace!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message...)

quotations from some Vatican II decrees from Frank Hartwig's, A Change of Face, Ass. of Baptists for World Evang., as he quotes Walter Abbott, The Documents of Vatican II:

and tradition...teaches that the Church...is necessary for salvation...through baptism men enter the Church. Whosoever...would refuse to enter her or to remain in her could not be saved." Thus tradition of men is added to Scripture for errant epistemology, and works of baptism and the sacraments, **including the mass**, are retained as the **route** for **eternal salvation**. (b) On pages 94-95, Abbott quotes Vatican II's doctrine on Mary: "This most holy Synod deliberately teaches...that the cult...of the Blessed Virgin be **generously fostered**...those decrees issued in **earlier times** regarding the veneration of images of Christ, the **Blessed Virgin**, and the saints, be **religiously observed**." On pages 90-91, Abbott quotes Vatican II, saying: "By her (the Virgin's) preaching and by baptism **she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God...**" Thus, Mary is still seen as a **co-redemptrix** to **Christ!!**

Infallibility which the Roman Pontiff ...enjoys in virtue of his office...his definitions...are justly styled **irreformable**, for they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, an assistance promised to him **in blessed Peter**."

Accordingly, our own investigation conforms with what we see from Scripture. Even after Vatican II, as does our Lord Jesus Christ, we still cannot tolerate "that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols!"