

REVELATION: CALL TO HOLINESS IN VIEW OF PROPHECY
Part II: "The Things Which Are": Profiting From God's Word To US"
D. Thyatira: The Leavened Church - Responding To Roman Catholicism
(Revelation 2:18-29)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many of us at Nepaug Church have come from Roman Catholic backgrounds. We realize that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone, Ephesians 2:8-9. To us it is a great blessing to know that our salvation does not rest with man-made rituals and faith plus the sacraments, but with God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ!

That is why we can feel confused or disarmed to feel pressure for us Evangelical Christians to **cooperate** with Roman Catholicism:

(1) 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."

(2) AP reporter, David Briggs wrote 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 aggressively proselytization of each other's flocks..."

(3) Missionary Frank Hartwig with ABWE writes of changes in Vatican II's Synod that seem **on the surface** to **improve** Catholicism's stands: (p. 22) (a) he notes the mass can be in the vernacular of the laity instead of in Latin; (b) Bible reading is to be encouraged by the laity and priests alike and (c) Protestants are no longer to be viewed as apostates and heretics, but as separated brethren, or just brethren!

(4) Dave Hunt's February, 2001 newsletter, The Berean Call cites the December, 2000 Religious News Service on a meeting of American Evangelical leaders: "James Dobson and Chuck Colson visiting the headquarters of the Catholic Church for a three-day conference at the Vatican on the world economy's impact on families." The report notes "They also met briefly with the pope." (Ibid., p. 4)

"Conference participant the Rev. Robert Sirico, a Catholic priest and president of the Action Institute, said Vatican officials told him they could not recall a similar meeting involving such high-level evangelical Protestants taking place at the Vatican." (Ibid.)

Well, HOW are we at Nepaug to RESPOND to all of this? How does GOD want US to relate to the Catholic Church today?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "As I am a former Roman Catholic, the Evangelical-Catholic dialogue currently in vogue raises my concerns! Is there a CLEAR word from GOD on Catholicism so I know how to handle this?!"

- I. **As we learned in past messages, Revelation 2-3 contains Christ's comments for the welfare of believers throughout Church History.**
- II. **Christ's message to the Church of Thyatira reveals His directives to believers regarding the Roman Catholic Church (as follows):**
 - A. "Thyatira" means "citadel of sacrifice," alluding to Catholicism's belief in the sacrifice of Christ's body at the altar in the Mass, 2:18.
 - B. Thus, Christ's word to Thyatira contains His insight on Catholicism:
 1. Jesus praised some of Catholicism's works: its **later** works (such as Vatican II) are **better** than its **former** (inquisitions, etc.) ones, 19
 2. However, Christ opposed Catholicism's tolerance of a "prophetsess Jezebel" within it, 2:20a. We decode this symbolism as follows:
 - a. **Jezebel** was O.T. Ahab's wife who promoted Baal worship.
 - b. Well, Baal worship borrowed a mother-child cult theme that began in Babylon with Nimrud's wife. It spread to the nations who in turn employed the same mother-child idea while adding their own deities, Alex. Hislop, The Two Babylons, p. 19-55.
 - c. Pagans entering Rome's Church saw a match in Mary and Jesus for Babylon's old cult, and **exalted Mary**. Christianity then was syncretized with paganism, Boettner, Rom. Catholicism, p. 136.
 3. These priests then fused pagan error & ritual onto this syncretism:
 - a. "Fornication" (2:20b) is applied to idolatry in the O.T., cf. Hos. 2:1-13. This word alludes to the idolatrous elevation of Mary.
 - b. The phrase "eating things sacrificed to idols" (2:20c) relates to 1 Cor. 8:14-22: since the elements in the Catholic mass are said to become Christ's body, ingesting them makes one idolatrous, offending consciences and inciting God's great displeasure!
 4. Jesus opposed such error, revealing Himself to be the **Son of God** (deity), 2:18. Thus, Catholics must exalt **Jesus ALONE** and **not Mary** and the **elements** of the "**mass**" as objects to be **worshipped!**

5. His piercing eyes & bronze feet picture discerning judgment (Num. 16; Dan. 10:6), so Jesus called The Roman Catholic Church to discern and repent of these syncretistic errors or be disciplined, 18!
- C. The remaining symbols of the text reveal the historical results of Christ's warning and promises of reward for overcomers (as follows):
1. Christ gave the Catholic Church time to repent of its pagan mixture with Scripture, but to no avail, Revelation 2:21.
 2. Hence, He disciplined its people with Tribulation (the Crusades) and her members (children) with death (Bubonic Plagues), 22-23.
 3. For **individuals** in Catholicism who were true to Christ, those who had not known Satan's depths, Jesus refused to add burdens, 2:24. Decoded, this terminology means legalism had risen with cultic, mother-son worship, blending with the well-meaning works of Catholics, 2:19. Jesus said He would not add to their legalistic burdens (Mtt. 11:28-30), but asked believers in the Church to hold their beliefs on His sole deity and salvation by faith in grace, 2:25.
 4. Overcomers would rule the nations by shattering them, and start a new era (Morning Star). This was fulfilled in the Protestant Reformation as follows, Revelation 2:26-28:
 - a. When the Reformation came with its adherence to "faith alone" and "Scripture alone" stands, Europe's Catholic-controlled boundaries shattered for 100 years, Augs. Hist. Atlas, p. 35-45.
 - b. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, count von Zinzendorf and others affected Western language and civilization for eras to come.

Application: *If we are Catholic, God calls us to (1) believe alone in Christ alone for salvation, Ep. 2:8-9. (2) Then, we are to live by God's power to do HIS Biblical works, Ep. 2:10! (a) This means handling post-salvation sins by confessing them ALONE to God ALONE (1 Jn. 1:9; 1 Tim. 2:5) & (b) relying on God's Spirit for power to live out Scripture's deeds opposite practicing man's errant rituals, Col. 2:11-23; Gal. 5:1-23. (3) We must be tactfully patient when disciplining others in Catholicism: their heritage is legalistically erroneous, but THEY are devoted to "God," so we must HONOR their INTENT (Rev. 2:19) while graciously examining the Bible's teaching on pleasing God only by His grace! (4) Believers IN Catholicism should eventually want to withdraw ties with Rome, cf. Rev. 18:4; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1. (5) Jesus shows Vatican II did not purge paganism from Roman Catholicism (2:19-25); neither can we then unite with Rome!*

Lesson: *Those in Roman Catholicism have been seduced by a mixture of Scripture with paganism unto holding to a lie of legalistic bondage! Christ directs them to salvation and living by God's BIBLICAL grace! >*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

(1) In light of Scripture, Vatican II does not go far enough to warrant our fellowship with Rome. For confirmation, we quote from Frank Hartwig's booklet, A Change of Face, (ABWE) that cites Walter Abbott's, Documents of Vatican II that cites Vatican II works:

(a) On p. 33, Abbott cites Vatican II: "This sacred Synod...basing itself upon Sacred Scripture **AND tradition**...teaches... 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, man's traditions are added to Scripture for authority, and works with the **mass** are kept as necessary for 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 cites 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, in Vatican II, Mary is **still errantly** seen as a **co-redemptrix to Christ!!**

Hence, on the ONE hand, we cannot organizationally fellowship with the Roman Catholic Church as a SYSTEM.

(2) Yet, on a **personal** level, we must be kind and patient with **believers** who are still **within** Roman Catholicism's legalistic bondage:

A believer in Catholicism not long ago wrote an article in the area circular, the Voice entitled, "Why I Am Not an Ex-Catholic." He stated his urgings for local Catholic-Evangelical fellowship, including such views as, "We are saved by faith alone [Protestant view] -- AND we are saved by faith plus works [Catholic view]..." I wrote a response article **without** sending it to the Voice, **but** to this **believer**, entitled, "Why I Am Not An Ex-Fundamentalist." It showed how the Roman Catholic Church is still promoting the Catholic Church's decrees of the Council of Trent that anathematized our Biblical beliefs on salvation. This man wrote back to me, thanking me for not sending my article to the Voice, admitting he still had problems with his Church's stands. .