

# **Roman Catholicism: Is It the "Whore of Babylon"?**

by David R. Reagan

The favorite buzz word in Christianity today is "tolerance." Christian leaders across the spectrum are urging their followers to forget doctrinal differences and to embrace all those who profess to be Christian. One manifestation of this trend has been an increasing acceptance of Catholics by Protestant, Evangelical leaders, even leaders like Billy Graham. The urge to embrace Catholics has been especially strong among Charismatics. At last year's national convention of Charismatics held in Indianapolis, half the audience and several of the key speakers were Catholics.

## **The Challenge**

Recently, Paul Crouch, the head of the Trinity Broadcasting Network and a leading Charismatic spokesman, made the following observation regarding the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation (the concept that the bread and the wine in the Mass become the literal body and blood of Christ): *Well, we [Protestants] believe the same thing. So you see, one of the things that has divided us all of these years shouldn't have divided us all along because we were really meaning the same thing but just saying it a little differently ... I am eradicating the word Protestant even out of my vocabulary ... I'm not protesting anything any more ... it is ... time for Catholics and non-Catholics to come together as one in the spirit and one in the Lord.*<sup>1</sup>

Another well known Charismatic leader, Earl Paulk of Atlanta, has also been calling for Evangelicals to embrace the Catholics without reservation. He has labeled Protestant critics of Catholicism as "doom prophets," and he scoffs at the idea that anyone should be concerned about Catholics praying to Mary.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Response**

What should be our attitude toward Catholicism? Was the Reformation simply much ado about nothing? Has modern day Catholicism reformed itself sufficiently to justify our overlooking doctrinal differences in the name of Christian love and unity? The first point I would like to make is that Catholicism is not nearly as apostate as some forms of mainline Protestant Christianity. The Catholic Church strongly affirms the virgin birth, the deity of Jesus, and the reality of the Resurrection. All three of these cornerstone truths have been rejected by mainstream liberal Protestantism in its obsessive search for what it calls "the historical Jesus." In short, apostasy is not a Protestant versus Catholic issue. There is apostasy on both sides of the fence. If Catholicism affirms the deity and resurrection of Jesus, then where does it fall short of Biblical standards? Where is the apostasy?

## **Catholic Apostasy**

It is manifested first and foremost in the Church's concept of salvation. The bottom line is that the Catholic Church has never accepted the great Biblical truth that was restored to Christendom by the Reformation; namely, that salvation is by grace through faith, and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-10). Catholic leaders will deny this. They will affirm salvation by grace. But the fruit of their teaching and preaching testifies otherwise.<sup>3</sup> There are millions of Catholics around the world who believe they are saved because:

- they were born a Catholic, or
- they received Catholic baptism as infants, or
- they attend Mass twice a year, or
- they go to confession regularly, or
- their name is on the roll of a local parish, or
- they live a good, clean moral life.

All these misguided concepts translate into one thing - belief in salvation by works. And the people who express them are spiritually lost because they have never been born again. They have no personal relationship with Jesus as their Savior and Lord. I am not saying there are no saved Catholics. There certainly are Catholics who have discovered the Lord and have put their faith in Him. But they are the exception, and most have discovered the Lord through their own Bible study and not through the teaching of the Church.

## **Doctrinal Confusion**

This raises the question of whether or not such true believers within Catholicism should remain there or leave. I think that question can best be answered with a series of questions:

- Can a person grow spiritually in an atmosphere of idolatry where people are encouraged to bow before images of Mary and Saints and pray to them?
- Can people reach their full spiritual potential in a church that denies the priesthood of all believers (I Peter 2:9), requiring its people to approach God through special priests who are not ordained in God's Word?
- Can people grow in the image of Jesus in a church that de-emphasizes the importance of Bible study and exalts the traditions of men over the Word of God?
- Can people ever have any confidence of their salvation in a church that requires cleansing punishments for sin in the form of penance in this life and purgatory after death?
- Can a person ever come to a true understanding and appreciation of the unique role and work of Christ when His mother is exalted as a co-redeemer and His sacrifice on the Cross is debased by a teaching that He must die repeatedly in the Mass?

I could go on and on, for the apostasies of the Catholic Church are great in number and profound in their implications for the Christian faith.

## **The Veneration of Mary**

Particularly appalling in modern history has been the increasing emphasis given to the worship of Mary. This gross idolatry was accentuated by the selection of a Polish Pope, for the adoration of Mary has long been a central focus of Polish Catholicism. Again, Catholics will deny that they worship Mary. They argue, instead, that they simply give her the honor that she deserves. But, again, their actions speak louder than their words, and in this case, official words are sufficient to establish the point. Consider, for example, the following statement taken from an official Catholic publication: *Mary is co-redemptrix of the human race ... because with Christ she ransomed mankind from the power of Satan. Jesus redeemed us with the blood of His body, Mary with the agonies of her heart ... The church and the saints greet her thus: "You, O Mary, together with Jesus Christ, redeemed us ..." God has ordained that no grace will be granted to us except through Mary ... No one will be saved or obtain mercy except through you, O Heavenly Lady ... No one will enter heaven without passing through Mary as one would pass through a door ... O Mary, our salvation is in your hands.*<sup>4</sup>

This is blasphemy of the worst sort. It is the ancient Babylonian mystery religion parading in new clothes, worshipping Mary as the "Queen of Heaven."

## **To Leave or Not to Leave?**

So, what should believing Catholics do? I have found that most try to hang in at first, attempting to have some influence on their priest or parish, hoping especially to bring the good news of a personal relationship with Jesus to their fellow Catholics. But it usually does not take long for them to realize that their efforts are not appreciated. They must then decide whether to remain or leave. If they remain, they compromise what they believe by keeping silent, and they jeopardize their own spiritual growth. If they decide to leave, it is always a painful choice, since to depart means leaving behind dear friends. It also usually results in condemnation by family members. What then should they do? They should do exactly what any believer should do who is caught up in any apostate religious organization, whether it be a Catholic parish or a Protestant church. They should leave! The Bible says, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership ... has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?" (II Corinthians 6:14-15).

## **Deceptive Tolerance**

The current emphasis on tolerance in Christianity is a subtle ploy of Satan to corrupt the Church from within. The deception sounds so appealing: "Why draw lines of fellowship over doctrinal differences? The only thing that's important is sincerity. Reach out and embrace all those who profess Christ regardless of how doctrinally corrupt they may be. Do it in the name of Christian love. Do it for the sake of Christian unity." This type of thinking has led Earl Paulk to call for the Evangelical Christian world to embrace even the Mormons! It has motivated mainline liberal spokesmen to advocate that Christians show tolerance toward Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other pagan faiths by restraining ourselves from sharing the Gospel with them. Consider, for example, the following words of Episcopal Bishop John Spong of New Jersey: *In the fall of 1988, I worshipped God in a Buddhist temple. As the smell of incense filled the air, I knelt before three images of Buddha, feeling that the smoke could carry my prayers heavenward. It was for me a holy moment for I was certain that I was kneeling on holy ground... I will not make any further attempt to convert the Buddhist, the Jew, the Hindu or the Moslem. I am content to learn from them and to walk with them side by side toward the God who lives, I believe, beyond the images that bind and blind us.*<sup>5</sup>

Again, it all sounds so wonderful, so soothing, so *tolerant!* Tragically, it makes a liar of the very person they profess as Lord, for Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6). Those are not tolerant words.

## **The Coming World Religion**

The Christian leaders who are advocating tolerance to the point of embracing apostasy are going to triumph in the near future, at least temporarily. The Bible makes that clear. Just as "one world" thought is dominating the political and economic scenes today, it has captivated the thinking of both Catholic and Protestant leaders regarding religion. That thinking is paving the way for the establishment of the one world government of the Anti-Christ (Revelation 13:1-10) which will be supported by the one world religious system of the False Prophet (Revelation 13:11-18).

I believe the harlot church of Revelation 17 will most likely be an amalgamation of the world's pagan religions, including apostate Protestants, under the leadership of the Catholic Church. In that regard, I think it is significant that in 1989 the Archbishop of the Anglican Church, Robert Runcie, called for all Christians to accept the Pope as "a common leader presiding in love." Runcie made his appeal at an evening prayer service midway through his first official visit to the Vatican. "For the universal church, I renew the plea," he said. "Could not all Christians come to reconsider the kind of primacy the bishop of Rome exercised with the early church, 'a presiding in love' for the sake of the unity of the churches in the diversity of their mission?"<sup>6</sup>

We have already been given a chilling preview of what is to come. It occurred in November 1986 in Assisi Italy when Pope John Paul II called a convocation of the leaders of twelve world religions to pray to their gods for peace. One of those who came was the Dalai Lama who is considered to be a god himself! The show was stolen by an American Indian chief who danced and whooped to his god.<sup>7</sup>

Why did the Pope feel it was necessary to bring together pagan religious leaders to pray to pagan gods? Does the Pope feel his own god is inadequate to the task? The most obvious answer is that the Pope believes all the leaders were

praying to the same god. This is one of the most popular ideas in Christendom today. It is the concept that God has revealed Himself in many different ways to different peoples. The conclusion, therefore, is that there are many roads to God. It is tolerance gone to seed. It also contradicts the Scriptures which say that God has revealed Himself in only one person, His Son, Jesus of Nazareth (Hebrews 1:1-2).

### **The Importance of Doctrine**

We live in an age of demonic deception (I Timothy 4:1 and II John 7). We must be on guard at all times. We must test everything by the Word of God (I John 4:1 and II Timothy 2:15). There are those who argue that the only thing that is important is the Gospel, and we should be willing to embrace anyone who has accepted the Gospel. The Gospel is then defined as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (I Corinthians 15:1-5).

Such an attitude ignores the fact that doctrine can deny the Gospel. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses claim they accept the Gospel, but their doctrine of Christ denies the Gospel, for they claim that Jesus was the archangel Michael. Likewise, Mormons claim to accept the Gospel, but their doctrines pervert Jesus into a created god who is the brother of Lucifer. Doctrine is not irrelevant. That's why the Scriptures tell us to avoid "strange doctrines" (I Timothy 1:3) and "different doctrines" (I Timothy 6:3). That's why Paul publicly rebuked two men by name for teaching that the resurrection had already taken place (II Timothy 2:17). We are told to reject what is contrary to "sound teaching" (I Timothy 1:10) and to "retain the standard of sound words" (II Timothy 1:13). And in Titus 1:9 Paul says that an elder is to be able "to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it."

### **Catholic Doctrine**

Catholics claim to accept the Gospel, but their doctrines deny the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Jesus and the salvation of God by grace through faith. Catholic doctrine depreciates the significance of Jesus. For example, the tremendous importance of His incarnation is diminished by the doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception (the concept that Mary was also born without a sin nature). The all-sufficiency of the Lord's sacrifice on the Cross is dispelled by the doctrine of Transubstantiation, which holds that He is re-sacrificed daily in the Mass. His current unique role as our High Priest before the throne of God is diluted by the doctrine that Mary serves as our co-redeemer and interceder. The Jesus of Catholicism is not the Jesus of the Bible. He is a pagan god who denies us access to God the Father unless we atone for our own sins by paying penance in this life and then suffering in purgatory. The Mary of Catholicism is also not the Mary of the Bible. The Mary of the Bible was a woman of great faith and sterling character. But she was also a sinner who needed a Savior. The Catholic Mary is just another pagan god.

### **Catholic Idolatry**

Catholicism is steeped in idolatry. In their veneration of Mary and the Saints, Catholics commit the worst of all sins against God. There is a myth that prevails in Christianity which says that all sins are equal. That is not true. All sins are equal only in the sense that any sin condemns us before God. But all sin is not equal in the eyes of God. There are sins that God hates more than others.<sup>8</sup> That is why there are going to be degrees of punishment for the unrighteous.<sup>9</sup>

The Bible always portrays the worst possible sin as the sin of idolatry.<sup>10</sup> That is why the first commandment says, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3), and the second says "You shall not make for yourself an idol" (Exodus 20:4). And that is precisely why the Catholic Church, in its presentation of the Ten Commandments, always deletes the second commandment and then makes up the difference by doubling the last commandment against coveting, making of it two commands: you shall not covet your neighbor's house, and you shall not covet his wife.<sup>11</sup> This is blatant scriptural manipulation designed to cover up the sinful idolatry of the Church.

But God cannot be mocked (Galatians 6:7). His Word says that idolaters will be excluded from Heaven. They will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). The message of the Holy Spirit to those caught up in the spiritual darkness of Catholicism is, "Come out of Babylon!" (Revelation 18:4).

### **Notes:**

- 1) **CIB Bulletin**, December 1989, page 2. (Newsletter of the Christian Information Bureau, P.O. Box 7349, Bend, Or. 97708.)
- 2) Earl Paulk, **That the World May Know** (Dimensions Publications, 1987), page 16.
- 3) An excellent resource on the issue of works salvation is a booklet by Albert James Dager entitled, **Six Roman Catholic Doctrines that Nullify Salvation by Grace** (Media Spotlight, 1988) For a copy, write to Media Spotlight at P.O. Box 290, Redmond, Wa. 98073.
- 4) **CIB Bulletin**, February 1991, page 1.
- 5) **The Voice**, Diocese of Newark, January 1989.
- 6) **Sunday Advocate**, Baton Rouge, La., October 1, 1989, page 3A.
- 7) **Time**, November 10, 1986, pages 78-79.
- 8) See, for example, Proverbs 6:16-19.
- 9) See Isaiah 59:16-19, Luke 20:45-47, and Revelation 20:11-15.
- 10) See Isaiah 40:18-26, Isaiah 44:9-20, Jeremiah 10, Ezekiel 6:1-7, Ezekiel 8, Ezekiel 14, Hosea 4:11-14, and Hosea 13:1-3.
- 11) **The Catholic Encyclopedia** (Thomas Nelson, 1987), page 124.