

Place: Lurgan Baptist 10:2:2009

Reading: Rev 17:1-18

THE CHAOS OF THE CULTS

10. ROMAN CATHOLICISM (Part 1)

“ Today for the first time in history a bishop of Rome sets foot on English soil and I deeply moved at this thought.” Those were the words of Pope John Paul as he spoke in Westminster Cathedral on 28th May 1982. The Times described this visit as “ *Pope John Paul’s historic pilgrimage of faith.*” It was certainly a historic visit. He was also the first Pope to visit Canterbury Cathedral and his agreement with Archbishop Runcie to study and pursue further the union of their respective churches no doubt gave a boost to ecumenism. At Bellahouston Park in Glasgow he said to a gathering of people from many different traditions, “ *We are only pilgrims on this earth making our way towards that heavenly kingdom promised to us as God’s children, beloved brethren in Christ for the future can we not make that pilgrimage together hand in hand.*” While in Scotland to meet his flock of 820,000 he was welcomed in the courtyard of the New College Edinburgh, by the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, and the brief ceremony took place under the shadow of the Scottish Protestant Reformer, John Knox.

Was that significant ? Certainly the gospel preached by John Knox was thoroughly biblical, apostolic and Christ exalting but radically different from that which the Pope brought to Britain. Sadly, however, such differences are

no longer important to many Protestants in Britain, and even to those who claim to be Christians. You see, there is a common belief today that the Roman Catholic Church is just another Christian church. Moreover, we live in an age of ecumenism, where the prevailing atmosphere is one of all round chumminess. Dare we go against the stream then ? Ought we to critique a church that is seeking stronger links with those that it refers to “ *as separated brethren ?*” Well, let me say some things by way of introduction.

1. When we talk about Roman Catholicism we are not referring to all individuals who worship according to the Roman faith:

When one speaks critically of Romanism you get a comment like this. “ *But I have Roman Catholic neighbours and they are delightful to live with.*” Or, “ *I work with Roman Catholics and you could do no find nicer people.*” I would not question that at all. Neither must we forget that the same could be said of many Muslims, Hindus, or even atheists. Our criticism of Romanism does not relate to persons but to principles, doctrine and dogma.

2. The issue has always been, “ what is the true gospel ?” This is where the battle lies. Who is telling the truth when speaking of the gospel of Jesus Christ ? What is the gospel of Christ ? Where we can find it ? With whom has it been entrusted ? For the Roman Catholic, there is but one answer. Rome has the gospel. Rome has been in charge of the mind of Christ. It is through Rome alone that we must travel on our way to the heavenly city. Well, that is the claim.

(1) THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY

The Catholic (Universal) Church is the one true Church established by Jesus Christ for the salvation of all mankind. (Rev John A. Brien, *The Faith of Millions*, 46)

You see, it's the gospel that is at stake. This is why unity must never be sought at the expense of truth. My when a church is in error concerning key doctrines such as sin, the atonement, justification by faith, Scripture and thereby proclaims a different gospel, we will never unite. Paul would have nothing to do with any attempt to compromise, add to, diminish, blend, or confuse the gospel. All such attempts met with his stern warning,

“ But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” (Gal 1:8)

3. Though we be considered narrow and intolerant let us remember we are not alone:

We believe as our evangelical forefathers did. Were those men of God right ? Wesley, Whitefield, Ryle, Spurgeon, were they wrong, or were they right ? Now I ask, if they were right, who has changed ? Romanism has not changed. “ *Semper Eadem*,” we never change, this is what the Roman Catholic Church glories in. So it is to this system with its 980 million adherents that we turn.

In our first part this I want to deal with three questions.

How did the Roman Catholic Church come into existence ? Well, let's turn to (Rev Ch 17) Now remember the book of Revelation is divided into three parts. (1) Past: (Ch 1) The Unveiled Christ: (2) Present:

The seven churches (Ch's 2-3) (3) Future: (Ch's 4-22)

Now in (Ch's 6-18) we have the Tribulation period, so (Ch 17) falls within this period so the judgment that is poured out here is future. Indeed Revelation (Ch 17 & 18) deal with the whole question of Babylon. Now keep in mind that Babylon is both a city (17:18) and a system. In this chapter we have the *Babylonish System* in the next chapter we have the *Babylonish City*. Now look at (17:1) and see how John sets the scene. He talks here about:

1. THE JUDGMENT (1:1)

Incidentally, three times in this book John is bidden to “ *Come hither*,” there is the Vision in Heaven (4:1) There is the Judgment of the Great Whore (17:1) and there is the Bride, the Lamb's wife. (21:9) So this is : Judgment.

2. THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT WHORE:

The worst name a woman can be called is a whore. Who is this ? Is this a person ? Is this a party of some kind ? Or is this a system of some kind ? 1: 2

3. THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT WHORE THAT SITTETH UPON MANY WATERS:

The language is symbolical. What did the angel mean ? (17:15) Note please the " s " at peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. That would indicate that this is not a person. Well, who or what is this ? (17:5) My this is a God hating, Blood-shedding, Gold-loving prostitute called " *Mystery Babylon.* " Now let's have a closer look at her. For there are several things stated about this woman and the religious system she represents. Notice for example,

(a) HER POWER:

Look at (17:2) This scarlet woman has one master craving power. To get that power she has abandoned every principle. She will do anything for power. Do the Kings of the Earth have power ? She will court them, cajole them, and command them. Do the masses of the earth have power ? She will intoxicate them with her filthy brews and filch that power from them while they are drunk. She must have universal power. Her name is Babylon. Her home is the city of the seven hills (17:9, 18) which is Rome. Here is an apostate religious system linked with Rome and for centuries this Roman system has exerted power. Sometimes she has ruled the nations with an iron hand, sometimes she has guided affairs with a velvet glove. Sometimes her power has waned beneath the hammer blows of Renaissance, Reformation, Revival but ever Rome has sought after power.

Lecky the historian has aptly summed her up.

“ *In the Minority a Lamb: in Equality a Fox: In Power a*

Tiger.” Today, Rome is in an Ecumenical mood wooing the apostate liberal Protestant Church making overtures to the separated religious Orthodox Church of the East but in a coming day she will resume her mantle of power. Look not her only at (a) look at:

(b) HER POSTURE:

(17:3) Now who is the beast ? (Rev 13:1) Now it's obvious that the beast in (Ch 17) and the beast in (Ch 13) are one and the same. Look at (13:5) You see this scarlet beast represents the final stage of Gentile World Power headed up by an individual the beast, the Antichrist himself. And for a brief time this apostate religious system seems to achieve its heart desire. The woman sits astride the beast with everything seemingly under control. So you can see (a) (b)

(c) HER PROSPERITY:

(17:4) It is Rome's wealth that dazzles the Kings of the earth and makes them dance to her tune. The total wealth of the R.C. Church worldwide is estimated to be in excess of 70 billion dollars. Other churches are wealthy but Rome exceeds them all. The Vatican is an International Financial Power. It has extensive holdings in hotels, transportation, companies and industry. Its assets are protected by a small army of financially expert Jesuit priests. The Roman Catholic Church is by far the wealthiest institution on earth. Are you beginning to get a picture of this woman ? Can you see her (a) (b) (c)

(d) HER PASSION:

For John says, “ *Having a cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications.*” (17:4) The word “ *abomination,*” in Scripture is a common name for idols and idolatrous worship is never far removed from all kinds of immorality. When Mr. Chiniquy, a most successful Roman Catholic priest was a young vicar, he was greatly troubled by the evils of the church and he took his doubts and disillusionments to his superior. Turning to the young priest his superior said,

When Satan tries to shake your faith by the scandals you see, remember that more than twelve popes have been raised to that high and holy dignity by the rich and influential prostitutes of Rome with whom they were publicly living in the most scandalous way. Remember that young illegitimate child John the eleventh, the son of Pope Sergius, who was consecrated Pope when only twelve years old, by the influence of his prostitute mother, Marosia, who was so horribly profligate that he was disposed by the people and clergy of Rome.

Then the old priest concluded his remarks to Chiniquy with these words,

“ If our Holy Church has been able to pass through such storms without perishing is it not living proof that Christ is her pilot: that she is imperishable and infallible because St. Peter is her foundation.”

Look at (17:5) and notice,

(e) HER PAST:

(17:5) Now this title, “ *Babylon the Great,*” is not a reference to Babylon as a city or to Babylonia as a nation, this is a religious designation, in other words the woman corresponds religiously to what Babylon was religiously. She is further described as “ *The mother of harlots earth.*” You see all the pagan rites of Babylon filtered into Roman Catholicism from which Protestantism separated itself. But what was Babylon like religiously ? Let’s go back to (Gen 10:8) and note.

(1) The COMMENCEMENT of this False Religion:

Another translation puts it like this, “ *And Cush begat Nimrod the rebellious panther and he began to be a mighty rebel, and arrogant tyrant defiant before the face of the Lord.*” Nimrod means “ *rebel.*” This man wants to head a great confederacy in open revolt against God. Where is this rebellion taking place ? (Gen 10:10) Babel, originally it meant “ *the gate of God, later it came to mean ‘ confusion.’*” Now (Gen 10:10) is the key to the first eleven verses of (Ch 11) where there is brought before us the Tower of Babel a project that was sponsored by Nimrod. Where did this building occur ? (Gen 11:2) Shinar was Babylon. What did this building signify ? (Gen 11:4) They wanted Political Unity (City) and Religious Unity (Tower) Actually (11:4) reads like this, “ *whose top is like unto the heavens.*”

The idea was to build a tower topped by the heavens that is by the signs of the zodiac. Did you ever go inside

a Temple and look at the dome of it ? And you could see the sun, stars, planets. Do you know it came down from Babylon ? This is what Nimrod and his followers did. They had made this tower and temple for their new religion, this gateway to heaven but God was not in all their thoughts. Look at God's reaction. (Gen 11:5-8) I want you to see this scattering because this Babylonish Religion permeated every part of the world. This was the start of Satan's church and it began with Nimrod and he was building a Temple and he was going to make a new way back to God and idolatry was introduced. I trust that you know my that there is no gateway to God outside of Christ. He Himself said, " *I am the way,* " (Jn 14:6) (1) but think of,

(2) The DEVELOPMENT of this False Religion:

You see secular history tells us that Nimrod married a woman who was as evil and demonic as himself. Her name was Semerimus. Knowing God's promise of a future Saviour (Gen 3:15) Semerimus claimed that Tammuz her first son fulfilled this prophecy. She thereupon instituted a religious system which made both and her son the objects of divine worship. She herself became the first high-priestess. Now the symbol of this Semerimus and Tammuz religion was a figure of a mother holding a child in her arms. Thus began the mother-child cult which later spread all over the world. Dr. Dwight Pentecost tells the story that several years ago he visited an archaeological museum in Mexico city. A recent find had just been put on display which Mexican archaeologists had authenticated as belonging to the period about 200 years before Christ. The object

was the centre of religious worship among some of the early Indians in Mexico. Do you know what the image was ? A mother with a child in her arms. You see this Babylonian religion spread abroad to become the religion of the world. My do you know what

(3) The SACRAMENT of this False Religion:

Was ? Sacrament is a religious ceremony or act. Do you know what the teaching of Semerimus was ? I will tell you.

1. That Semerimus herself was the way to God. She adopted the title, " *Queen of Heaven.*" Does that sound familiar ?
2. That she alone could administer salvation to the sinner through various sacraments such as the sprinkling of holy water ?
3. That her son Tammuz was slain by a wild boar during a hunting trip.
4. That he was resurrected from the dead 40 days later. And each year after this the temple virgins of this cult would enter a 40 day fast as a memorial to Tammuz's death and resurrection.

5. After the 40 day fast, a joyful feast called Ishtar (from which we get the term Easter) took place. At this feast coloured eggs were exchanged and eaten as a symbol of the resurrection. An evergreen was displayed and a yule log was burned. Finally, hot cakes marked with the letter T were baked and eaten. Indeed I am told that from the moment of this child's birth every Babylonian had to wear a gold chain around his neck displaying the letter T. *Some folk have changed it to a Cross but it originated in Babylon.* Now it's very interesting to notice that both Ezekiel and Jeremiah

warned against this hellish thing. The prophet Ezekiel was called by the Lord to go to the temple and see this cultic practice in process. Ezekiel watched the women of Israel mourning over the death of the pagan Tammuz. (Ezekiel 8:13-14) Jeremiah condemned Judah for offering cakes and burning incense to the “ *Queen of heaven,*” in (7:18 and 44:17-19,25)

Are you beginning to see the whole thing a little clearer now ? My by the time of the Lord Jesus this cult had so influenced Roman life that the Caesars were not only crowned as Emperors of Rome but also bore the title Pontifex Maximus meaning “ *High Priest.*” They were High Priests of the Babylonian Satanic church. There was a union of church and state. Here is what happened. During the year 306AD a Roman Emperor named Constantine was threatened by a very powerful enemy army. Realising that his uneasy troops needed confidence Constantine claimed to have seen a vision on the eve of battle. He saw a large blue flag with a Red Cross on it and heard a mighty voice which said, “ *in this sign conquer.*”

He thereupon marched his troops into a shallow river and claimed them to be officially baptised and ordered the sign of the cross painted on all his weapons. Thus inspired he led his troops to victory and subsequently made Christianity the state religion of Rome (306 AD) The Roman priests of Tammuz soon discovered that they could easily make the transition into Christianity (with certain changes) and thereupon carried their traditions forward without interruption by promoting the mother-child worship concept, the holy water sacrament etc;
My Constantine brought Babylonianism into

Christendom and it has continued to this day under the leadership of a man who bears the title Pontifex Maximus the Pope himself. My every leading feature of Romanism can be traced to the Babylonian Religion that God cursed and called and called confusion in (Gen Ch 10) Now let’s go back to (Rev 17) and note,

(f) HER PERSECUTIONS:

(17:6) You see if ever you were in doubt about the identity of this woman here it is. There is one system on the face of this earth that has been drunken with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus and that is the R.C system.

Why would Rome ever apologise for or even admit this holocaust ? Pagan Rome killed thousands of Christians and not a few Jews, but Papal Rome slaughtered many times that number. Lecky the historian in his “ *Rationalism in Europe,*” charges Romanism with being responsible for the deaths of more innocent people than other institution in history, some 50 million in all. My the atrocities wreaked upon God’s people by Rome fill whole books of history. And if the Protestant Cleric’s in our land have forgotten what this pagan, papal, Roman church did to thousands yes, to millions of saints of God I can tell you that God has not forgotten and God will judge this system in the Tribulation. (1)

(2) THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

You see, the reason why the Christian and the Catholic positions are diametrically opposed is down to this question of authority. For both have contrary sources of

authority to which they appeal for truth. Think for a moment of,

(a) THE TRUTH OF GOD:

Do you recall the words of the Lord Jesus in His great high priestly prayer? “*Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy Word is truth.*” (Jn 17:7) My God has spoken and the record of His revelation is found in His Word. The sixty six canonical books of the Bible are a sufficient revelation of God to man and sufficient for all matters of faith and practice. Time and again in the Bible we see the sufficiency of Scripture. The Lord Jesus said,

“*Search the Scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me.*”

(Jn 5:39) Paul repeatedly appealed to Scripture, as when he asks, “*For what saith the Scripture?*”

(Rom 4:3) To Timothy he says, “*from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God*”

(2 Tim 3:16) Jude exhorts us “*to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,*”

(Jude 3)

Greek scholar Henry Alford wrote that “*the faith,*” is objective here, the sum of that which Christians believe.

“*Which was once delivered,*” or “*which was once for all.*” The Greek word here (hapax) refers to something done for all time, with lasting results, never needing repetition. My nothing needs to be added to “*the faith,*” that has been delivered “*once for all.*” How did God deliver “*the faith,*” ? Through His Word, the Bible. So through the Scriptures God has given us a

body of teaching that is final and complete. Do you know what this means ? No extra-biblical tradition is required, no papal bulls are needed. It is the Bible and the Bible alone that is the source of our authority. This is the doctrine of Sola Scriptura, that is the Bible alone. But Rome says no, it is not the Bible alone. It is the (a plus,

(b) THE TRADITION OF MEN:

The Council of Trent (1545-63) the most authoritative of all Roman councils, in the year 1546 declared that both the Bible and tradition contained the Word of God that the two are of equal authority, and that it is the duty of every Christian to accord them equal respect. Thus while Modernism takes away from the Word of God Romanism adds to the Word of God. Well, she claims that are five other sources which have divine authority.

1. The fifteen books of the Apocrypha written between the Old and the New Testaments. Roman Catholics consider these books as genuine Scripture. (Broderick ed, Catholic Encyclopedia, 73-74)

2. Divine authority is to be found in the authorized Tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, which is considered as the “*Word of God.*” (Broderick, 581)

3. Divine authority (infallibility) is given to the Pope when he speaks officially on matters of faith and morals.

(Broderick, 292)

4. When speaking in conjunction with the Pope and orthodox Catholic Tradition, Roman Catholic bishops are also held to be infallible, and therefore divinely authoritative. (Broderick, 292)

5. Official Catholic teaching is considered to have divine warrant and authority. (Broderick, 581)

Now all of these sources can be summarised by the term “ *Catholic Tradition.*” The Second Vatican Council held from 1962-1965, did not change in how it viewed tradition. Vatican 11 Chapter 2 paragraph 9 reads,

Consequently it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence It is clear therefore that sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord to God’s most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the other. (Strongholds Shaken, p, 203 David Legge)

Do you see what Rome is doing ? She is placing Catholic Tradition and the Scriptures on the same level. Do you recall what our Lord said to the Pharisees who adopted the same attitude to Scripture ? “ *Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition ? Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*” (Matt 15:3, 6) How Catholic Tradition be God’s revealed will when it blatantly contradicts what is taught in God’s revealed Word ? My if the Bible is truly God’s Word and it is, then anything that conflicts with the teaching of this Book cannot possibly come from God. (1) (2)

(3) THE QUESTION OF THE PAPACY

Dr. Hugh Pope, himself a Roman Catholic, gives us the attitude of the Roman Catholic to the Papacy. He states, **For a Catholic, the Papacy is the key to whole religious question. For, to put it concisely, we believe the doctrines of our faith, not because we fancy we discover them set forth in the New Testament, nor because a vague entity called ‘ The Church,’ has held them, but because the visible teaching church the Corpus Christi or body of Christ, has taught them and continues to teach them, through its head on earth, the Pope, the Successor of St. Peter, the Vicar of Christ.** (The Papacy, Summer School of Catholic Studies at Cambridge, 1923)

Lets think about that statement and stress the fact that it conveys,

(a) ***THE WRONG NAME:***

The word ‘ *pope,*’ comes from the Latin ‘ *papa*’ meaning ‘ *father.*’ The Pope is regarded as the vicar of Christ on the earth, taking the place of Jesus Christ in the world. He is also viewed as the ruler of the world and supreme over all. Within the ranks of Romanism the Pope of Rome is addressed and referred to in terms of adulation: “ *His Holiness, The Chief Shepherd, The Holy Father, The Lord God the Pope, The Father of Princes and Kings, Ruler of the World, the Vicar of our Saviour Jesus Christ.*” What blasphemy. Indeed our Lord Jesus Christ warns us “ *And call no man your father (that is in a spiritual context) for one is your father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters*

for one is your Master even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”

(Matt 23:9-11) Do you think that humility demanded by Christ is reflected in the Papacy ? (a) But notice,

(b) THE WRONG CLAIM:

1. The claim that Peter was the First Pope:

Look if you will at (Matt 16:13-18) Now throughout centuries of church history a variety of suggestions have surrounded the meaning of the word ‘*rock*,’ as used by the Lord Jesus. Let me say simply, but categorically, Jesus Christ is the only foundation of the church and no other foundation can any man lay. If the Lord Jesus had planned to build His church on Peter as its foundation why did He not say, “ *And upon thee will I build My church.*” Of, course we know that He did not say that because that is not what He meant. The word Christ used for Peter is Petros in its Greek form and means a little stone or a piece of rock. However, the word translated

rock in the same verse is Petra which means the rock.

My according to Peter’s own testimony Jesus Christ is the Rock upon which the church is built and we are as living stones which are built upon this Rock. Paul put it like this, “ *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ.*” (1 Cor 3:11)

We refute the claim that Peter was the first Pope, indeed he identifies himself among the elders and did not elevate himself as the Bishop of Rome. (1 Pet 5:1) 1.

2. That Claim that the Pope is Infallible:

For the Roman Catholic teaches that when the Pope speaks ‘ *ex cathedra*,’ that is from his chair or authoritatively he is infallible in matters of faith and morals. (Broderick ed., Catholic Encyclopedia 203) Papal infallibility was pronounced at The Vatican Council which met in Rome in 1870, and to this proclamation there was attached these words.

But if any one, which may God forbid, shall presume to contradict this our definition, let him be anathema. (Roman Catholicism L. Boettner p, 303)

My I presume to contradict this definition, for the very silence of Scripture concerning an infallible church, or concerning Peter as an infallible pope, is in itself sufficient to disapprove the idea. Certainly Peter was not infallible as a teacher of faith and morals for a Antioch Paul had to rebuke him (Gal 2:11) My we don’t need a so called infallible pope, we have an infallible Bible and like the Psalmist we can say, “ *Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*” (Ps 119:105) Down through the centuries Rome’s policy has been to withhold the Bible from the people She opposed the Bible because the Bible opposed her But do you know what the Reformation did ? It shook Rome to its very foundations and the cry went up throughout all Europe, “ *Bring the book.*” (Neh 8:1) Is this your cry ? What about your desire for the Word of God ? Can you say with the Psalmist, “ *Oh, how I love Thy law, it is my meditation all the day.*” (Ps 119:97)