***The Roman Catholic Church, No. 2

RV13-01***

We are continuing with the study of the letter to the city in Pergamum, which is covered by Revelation 2:12-17. The letter to Pergamum, you remember, speaks to a church which is being released from the pressures of persecution and being tempted by appeals to adapt to the paganism round about it. It also, therefore, represents a period in church history where the church finally came to the point where it was no longer under the pressures of persecution. Christians were no longer being martyred in the arenas. Christians were no longer being denied a livelihood. Christians, as a matter of fact, found themselves in a favored position. Therefore, the temptation became very great to accept that luxurious new situation, and to adapt and to accommodate itself to the paganism round about them.

The local church, in every era of the church dispensation, obviously is faced with the same temptation to accommodate to popular views and practices in order to be accepted; to be prosperous; to get the money from people that the organization needs on a local level; and, to have the so-called esteem in the community, and the prestige and acceptance and everything that goes with it. Every local church and every age has been faced with the same problem that the church of Pergamum faced.

If you have been following the news, you are aware of the fact that the Presbyterian Church in the United States is now in conference. One of the main topics under debate is whether they should permit homosexuals to be ordained into the pastorate of the Presbyterian Church. The fact that the Bible condemns homosexuality does not obviously close the discussion for some within that communion. Well, obviously, in some quarters today, the Bible does not carry much weight. What the Bible says doesn't settle the issue. But from God's point of view, that's the way it is. God always operates on the basis of His integrity. His integrity is spelled out, of course, in doctrine. If you do not know doctrine, you will not know the integrity of God, and as we try to teach you now, you will therefore be foolishly compromising yourself and your prosperity and your happiness because you think you can get something from God that violates His integrity, which He will never give you. Where the Presbyterian Church goes on this issue will be how compatible they are to the integrity of God. God has spoken. The discussion is closed.

Well, from the time of the Emperor Constantine to about 600 A.D., which is represented historically by this church, the course of Christianity was downward. Persecution was closed, and the world society began dominating the church. Up to this point, churches were just a group of independent local organizations. They were separated from one another. They were united only on the basis of doctrine, and the Bible was the source of that information. Now, however, gradually Christianity came under human viewpoint leaders who incorporated pagan doctrines and practices which had originated in the Babylonian mystery religion, which was a substitute for genuine religion or genuine truth about God. It was a substitute following the flood. And the accommodation, through human viewpoint leaders in the church, gradually led to the amalgamation, which resulted in the Middle Ages in the Roman Catholic Church. This group lost all trace of biblical salvation. That was the worst thing about it. It lost all trace of much of biblical Christianity. But it lost complete trace of the doctrine of salvation by grace, and grace alone. The result was that millions of people had been sent into hell – into the flames of the lake of fire by the Babylonian mystery religions, and millions of people have been sent into hell by the Roman Catholic system, and are being sent into that hell.

Now, I'm coming down hard on it because a lot of you respect Billy Graham, and other religious leaders of his caliber, who find that they can accommodate themselves to the Roman Catholic Church. They can go to their groups, and they can speak to them, and they can convey to them the impression that: "Here we are on some common ground. You and I are Christians, wonderfully worshiping the same God, and wonderfully approaching this God in a way that is acceptable to Him. That is bestial." It's a travesty upon the truth of the Word of God. It is unbecoming and unbefitting a man of God who knows anything at all about the Word of God.

But the spirit of Pergamum is with us today: that spirit of accommodation; and, that spirit of adjusting in order to get the accolades and the acceptance of the world. As any pastor who is worth his salt knows, the day that he begins wanting to be accepted by his congregation, or by his community, or by anybody else, he's through as a voice to Almighty God. Then he must begin to select the path that he will walk. He will have to walk around certain things. He will have to be careful that he does not say certain things. He will have to think through his sermons and say, "Now, if I say this, who in my congregation is going to think I'm talking about him." It's like when you tell people that they ought to attend church, and it's wrong for them to stay at home. Who are the people that you've been talking about them that Sunday? All the gang that stayed at home. You have to be a man of God, not in the tradition of Pergamum, but in the tradition of Ephesus, where the Word of God is supreme, and the Word of God reigns powerful.

So just because powerful leaders in our day accommodate, don't you be deceived by that, and don't you think that the system of religion, which we inherited from Babylon through the Roman church, is not the terrible things that it really is. Remember that God calls it "a harlot." God calls it "Mystery Babylon," coming up, and it's going to be the world church of the Tribulation period. And by the same token, the same famed evangelists and other religious leaders who do not find any trouble accommodating to Romanism, find no problem in accommodating to the World Council of Churches. They find they can have fellowship with them equally well – the other segment that's going to be part of this devastating system.

**History of Roman Catholicism**

So gradually from 312, Constantine, the Roman Emperor, made Christianity a legitimate and accepted religion within the empire. And by 325, it was the only accepted religion of the empire. From that time on, the church gradually became less Christian and more Roman. In 300 A.D., prayers for the dead began. In 300 A.D., the making of the sign of the cross began to take hold of popular appeal. We have learned that the sign of the cross is a sign of the letter "T" for Tammuz, the Assyrian name for Nimrod, the founder of the Babylonian false system. In 325, the worship of saints and angels was instituted. In 394, the first mass was instituted. In 431, the worship of Mary began. In 600, priests began dressing differently from laymen. In 526, extreme unction was inaugurated. In 593, the doctrine of purgatory was introduced. In 600, the worship services began to be conducted in Latin, and Latin alone. That has only been changed in recent times. In 600, prayers began to be directed to Mary, and thus was instituted the concept that somebody dead was out there that can hear you, and you can talk to somebody who's dead. They know what's going on, and you can speak to them, and they can speak back to you. They can act in your behalf.

We have no indication in the Word of God that the dead know anything at all about what's taking place. They do not peek down and watch us. Here we have ancient practices out of Babylon incorporated into a worldwide religious system. We've been looking at these to try to give you some feel of where we are today, and some perspective on how monstrous is the accommodation of even evangelical leaders to this hybrid system of amalgamated Christianity and Babylonian paganism.

We see that worship was centered in the Babylonian system on the mother and her child. We see that the mother was viewed as a channel of mercy to the harsh and retributive son. We see that regeneration was taught by an external works system – a system of penance. And often these were depraved works. The chief god was the sun-god in the sky, incarnated in the child of the mother. The sun-god was worshiped in the form of a serpent named Asclepius. The Emperor in Rome was held to be the head of the state: paganism, the state religion. He carried the title Pontifex Maximus.

Of course, I'm not stopping to call your attention to the fact that the Roman Catholic system has absorbed all of these, and the Pope is now the Pontifex Maximus. The sign of the cross in worship was a sign of the sun-god incarnate, Tammuz. The circle of the sun was added to the cross as a symbol of the key of life. So you often see it held in the hand of the priests in ancient drawings. The system of the priests as the channel to God was instituted. Celibacy was imposed. They had religious orders of monks and nuns serving God, apart from marriage. I'm talking about the Babylonian system. I'm not talking about Roman Catholicism. I'm talking about the Babylonian system that did it this way. Roman Catholicism simply absorbed it as it became more and more accommodating, after the year 312, to the pagan system.

The un-bloody sacrifice of the mass, which was at the heart of the Babylonian system, was instituted. They instituted the tonsure, which is the shaven circle on the top of the head of the priest in order to show his submission to the sun-god. They used a small, thin, round wafer in the mass with the letters IHS upon it, which letter stood in honor of the Egyptian false trinity: Isis, Horus, and Seb, but which, under the Roman Catholic system, was changed to stand for "Jesus, Savior of Mankind:" "Iesous Hominum Soter." The circle in art that is drawn around the heads of the gods and of the saints, of course, again represents the sun-god. It was permeated through Roman Catholic art of the Middle Ages. They practiced the exaltation of the mother to the place in the Trinity as the Holy Spirit, and the mother was exalted as a co-Mediatrix with the Son. In translations of the Roman Catholic Bible into English, in earlier editions, you will find that Genesis 3:15 is translated with "she" instead of "He." "She shall bruise his head," because Mary was substituted for Christ. And every Roman Catholic priest that knew anything about Hebrew knew very well that that is not what the Hebrew says.

We have looked at the Christmas customs in honor of the sun-god incarnated: the yule log; the feast of Saturnalia; the boar's head; and, the mistletoe. Let's go on.

**The Last Rites**

All of this system of salvation by works always left the heart wondering whether one is going to really make it. There was always the edge of uneasiness that somehow one had not done all that was necessary in order to make it into heaven. As the centuries moved down from the year 300 toward the year 600, it became increasingly an era of darkness in spiritual things upon humanity. The gnawing concern and the uneasiness about one's destiny after dying grew with each year that went by. So consequently, the Roman church had to do exactly what the Babylonian mystery religion had to do. It had to offer, to those who were about to die, a rite which was in the form of the last rite, which was going to cleanse them of every last vestige of sin – to give them the feeling and the impression that at that moment, they're going out into eternity just as clean as anybody can be, so that they will be accepted by a Holy God.

**Extreme Unction**

This was done in the form of anointing a dying person with oil in the name of Jesus Christ. The priest comes in when he finds that somebody is dying. I have been in the presence of a Roman Catholic priest. I've seen them walk into a room where a person was on the threshold of death. I've seen them ask the first thing, "Has this person had extreme unction given to them?" If not, he sits. He listens to the confession, and then he gives absolution, and he gives the final cleansing of extreme unction to prepare this person for the journey out into death. This is administered only to people for whom all hope of recovery is gone. Death is certain. As a matter of fact, it is even given shortly after death. There is a specified period of something like 15 to 30 minutes (I don't know what it is) that the person's soul is viewed as residing still in the body.

Of course, the Bible is very clear that until the soul leaves the body, there isn't any death. That is what death is. It's the departure of the soul from the body. Yet, you can see that there will be cases where somebody didn't make it. Somebody suddenly took a turn for the worse and died before the priest could come with his oil and his rigmarole. And this human system says, "Well, I'll tell you. We'll hold the soul in there for 15 minutes. If you get us there within 15 minutes, we can still give you extreme unction and send you out clean." That is in contrast to the fact that the Bible makes the concept of death very clear again and again. In the case when Benjamin was born, his mother died. The Bible clearly says that what happened to her was her soul departed as the child was born.

This complete ignoring of Scripture is so appalling that you shake your head and say, "What's the discussion about?" Well, dear friends, don't forget that in the Roman church, the supreme authority is not the Bible. Their supreme authority is what is called "the teaching authority of the church." The teaching authority of the church resides in the pope himself, particularly when he sits upon his throne. When he speaks ex cathedra from his throne, he cannot make a mistake. All that he declares from that throne is the absolute mind of God. Therefore, if he sits upon his throne and says that the soul hangs in there for 15 minutes after the person is dead, that is what's the truth. The fact that the Bible indicates that death is the soul departing has no bearing upon the matter whatsoever.

**The Lord of Heaven**

The Babylonian system had a god who was named the Lord of Heaven or the Lord of Oil, which, of course, is associated with the messianic idea – the anointing of the Messiah with oil. These two ideas connected at the Lord of Heaven with that one that was anointed with oil. For this reason, the olive branch was the symbol of the Babylonian sun-god as the provider of peace. Again, we're still talking about the same mother and child (Nimrod in the Scriptures) who, because of the forces of righteousness, probably rising up under Noah's son Shem, who was still alive at the time, led the forces that probably were once responsible for executing Nimrod. And the whole Babylonian false system that had developed took a blow. This Nimrod was reincarnated, and that's where the doctrine of reincarnation came in. He was reincarnated as the child in the mother and child cult. This child was called the Lord of Heaven or the Lord of Oil.

**The Olive Branch**

One of his many symbols was the olive branch. Please remember that once the forces of righteousness rose against the system of the Babylonian religious culture, the whole thing had to go underground. So in order for them to talk to one another, they had secret language, and their language was symbols. All these symbols had great meaning to those who were the initiates – those who were on the inside. And like a modern lodge today, you didn't learn the secrets until you became a member of the organization. Then the members of the organization would share with one another these symbols, and they would say, "Oh, that's what they mean." They would speak in symbols, and they would look at each other, and they know what they were talking about.

Well, one of the symbols was the olive branch. Every time the olive branch was displayed, they knew that they were speaking in worship and honor of the child of the mother and child cult – the child in his role as the god of peace. The Greeks, therefore, would seek to placate the wrath of their gods with an olive branch to appeal to God's mercy. The true Messiah came as the God of peace. He came to bring peace. So that's where the olive branch business comes from that you and I, to this day, associate with the concept of peace.

So these supplicants were anointed with olive oil in the name of their god to secure peace at the moment of their death. This was called extreme unction. This oil contained drugs which often permeated (and were designed to permeate) into the body, and to create certain visions as being from the gods. The priest knew how to give the person a little bit of ease with the drugs as he was going out (just as doctors do today) and create hallucinatory effects for him. He thought it was because his extreme unction had put him into the position where he was being welcomed by the gods. It was a calculated deceit.

This anointing was called an unction. It was a means of communicating a person to the unseen world. As we have said, the Roman Catholic Church incorporated the whole heathen practice as one of its sacraments called extreme unction to prepare a dying person for this journey. The purpose, of course, is to allay the fears of facing the justice of God relative to their sins, because they had been taught to be saved on the basis of their merits, and their merits are not very much for them to go out on. It's totally foreign practice to Scripture, and it's based upon the teaching authority of the papacy.

**Purgatory**

This was not enough. Obviously, even the person who had received extreme unction in the Babylonian system, before he died, could still have an edge of concern. The fear that maybe the extreme unction didn't do it all still resided. So the Babylonian priest came up with a secondary backup system. It was called purgatory. This was to reassure the communicant that if, for some reason his extreme unction did not completely take care of his sins, he would yet have an opportunity after death to preserve his soul from hell. All the pagan religions of the ancient world inherited the practice of purgatory. They all had it.

Plato taught this idea about the dead. You can turn to the writings of Plato, and you can find him talking about purgatory, and prayers for the dead, and easing them into a heavenly, happier life. The Romans clearly believed in such a stage after death for all. Purgatory was a common doctrine. Very quickly, obviously, there was something that was a correlative which would go with that. That is that these people were in purgatory for what purpose? To have themselves cleansed from their sins, which extreme unction didn't finish, and their own penance hadn't finished. So if they're there for cleansing, the next step was to give them some aid in doing it.

**Prayers for the Dead**

Thus originated in the Babylonian system, along with the doctrine of purgatory, the practice of prayers for the dead. The pagan system left open the possibility for those who are unfit for heaven to make it after death. The mafia operated in Babylon as well as in the USA. Therefore, when the mafia boys got shot down on the steps of their temple, their relatives had to be given some hope that they could make it to heaven in spite of the fact of what they had been. Particularly, since they were the people with money, it was a very easy decision to say, "Well, we'll have prayers for the dead." However, those prayers, most efficaciously, will be presented by the priests, and the priest must be paid for his service.

Great sums of money to this day are drawn off from Roman Catholic families in order to have a priest utter prayers on behalf of their departed loved ones in order to ease their journey out of the sufferings of purgatory. The idea of salvation, therefore, taught by the pagan system, was that purgatory was a transition stage of punishment into heaven. Consequently, very few people would be expected to go to hell. Everybody had a chance to make it to heaven because there was always purgatory.

I read about one Roman Catholic priest that had written at one time there were only two people in hell for sure. One was Judas because he betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. The other was Martin Luther because he betrayed the mother church. They knew that those two were in hell, but the rest were all happily in purgatory, making their way upward.

So what have we seen the other day? When Moro, the political leader of Italy was slain, the pope made a declaration because this was a famous man. What was the pope's declaration? He was talking to a bunch of schoolchildren. He encouraged the school children to pray for the soul of Moro. The pope was mouthing the words of Babylonian paganism. You may search the Scriptures from one end to the other, and you will not find a whisper of a suggestion such as that – that our prayers here on earth can in any way affect the destiny of those who have died. As a matter of fact, the Bible makes it very clear that after death is judgment, and nothing else. After death is judgment and nothing else. The judgment does not open the way to a second chance.

Nothing has changed. That's my point. Nothing has changed from this amalgamated mongrel system of Roman Catholicism – the mixture of Babylonian paganism and biblical Christianity. Nothing has changed in our day. The pope is still playing the same system.

Of course, this was a source of fantastic revenue to the church. This was a gold mine. The pagans saw it as that. The Roman Catholic Church saw it as that. The whole idea is one that violates the Word of God on all accounts.

**The Worship of Relics**

Another practice taken over from paganism was one that Martin Luther loathed. That is the worship of relics. This is at the heart, again, of the Roman Catholic system. This is some material object which is related to a saint and which is believed to have, thereby, magical powers because it's associated with a saint. Because you have some contact with this relic, you will receive merit toward salvation, and even material blessings. The bones, and the various places of these bones, are all held in great veneration in Roman Catholic circles as they were in Babylon. Great stories are told about miracles which are worked by the powers of these relics and their places of burial.

These miracles must be associated, of course, with someone who is a saint. You cannot be canonized in the Roman Church until it has been established, supposedly, that a miracle has been associated with you. But here again is the concept that the dead can help the living.

The Roman Catholics, interestingly enough, have a common ground here with the charismatic movement in its claims of miracles today. The Roman Catholics say, "Here is this bone. It came from the shoulder of St. Peter. This bone has magic. It will accomplish great things if you touch it. If you are sick, we will lay it upon your illness and you will be healed. It has miracle powers." What does the charismatic movement claim? The same sort of thing. To the extent that genuine healings perhaps do take place, they are both sharing the demonic influence that is inherent in the charismatic movement and in Roman Catholicism.

So the Roman Catholics have another channel of purported blessing. Here it is from dead people. It amounts to worshiping rags and dried up bones. What did heathenism do? Ancient historians have recorded for us this same superstition – powers of relics to give spiritual blessings. These were usually the relics of their deified heroes. These relics were a conspicuous part of heathen worship long before Christianity. And I must stress it was a conspicuous part. Relics from deified heroes were a conspicuous part of heathen practice of the Babylonian system long before Catholicism came on the scene.

For example, the religion of Buddhism had its relics of Buddha to aid in securing divine blessings. Some made claims of possessing the teeth of Buddha. The teeth of Buddha were viewed as having fantastic miracle-working power. But one of the popes of the Middle Ages gave Francis Joseph of Austria, who was a favorite Roman Catholic with him, what was purportedly a tooth from the mouth of Saint Peter. That was a big thing. Can you imagine having a tooth from the mouth of Saint Peter? And here a pope of the Roman Catholic Church wants to honor one of his followers, a man of importance. How does he do it? He gives him a relic. What's the value? The tooth of St. Peter has power. But so did the tooth of Buddha to those who believe that foolishness.

The Roman Catholic Church had a problem. Since Jesus Christ rose physically from the dead, there were no pieces of Him left behind for them to make relics out of. All they had was a collection of blood from the foot of the cross. I have told you about how I used to have a crucifix (as a teenager) that opened, and in it was some red clay. There was a little note inside. It said, "This clay was stained by the blood of Jesus Christ at the foot of the cross." I was awed. How many teenagers in Chicago had part of the dirt from the foot of the cross with part of the blood of Christ in it? I did. I wish I still had it. I don't remember what happened to that. I know some of you would pay me quite a bit to see that.

They have the tomb, of course. They have the cross. Oh, my, do they have the cross? Boy, when the Crusades started bringing pieces of the cross back, they have thousands of crosses out of the authentic wood as the cross of Jesus Christ that they brought back from the Crusades when they were trying to retake the Holy Land.

The custom of relic worship goes back to Babylon – to the religious system that was invented by Nimrod. Where this came from was that the execution of Nimrod by the forces of righteousness was also followed, as I've told you, by the custom of the day, to make a point by cutting up the body of the victim. And Nimrod was cut up into 14 pieces and sent to strategic locations as a warning against apostasy. It was a warning to the other apostates. When the apostates were again able to take charge, then they gathered together the remains of Nimrod. Wherever they found the remains, history tells us that they buried it. They found a bone from his arm, and they found a tooth from him. These became relics that had secret, supernatural, magical powers. The burial places themselves became the shrines with miracle-working powers. These shrines made the very ground that they stood on a holy place. So what happened next? This ground was now consecrated ground. It was viewed as meritorious to God. Thus arose in the Roman Catholic system, as it was in the Babylonian system, that certain people who did not merit it were not permitted to be buried in consecrated ground. So it rose in the Roman Catholic system that if you were a suicide, you could not be buried in consecrated ground – ground that the priest had consecrated. The Babylonian priest did the same thing. This consecrated ground was viewed as bringing merit to those who were buried there.

**Pilgrimages**

You can see that the next step was very quickly associated with the relics: pilgrimages. The ancient world was filled with pilgrimages. They were always going to holy places. They were always putting up caravans to go to some sacred site where some sacred relic was buried. What is characteristic of Roman Catholicism today, but pilgrimages? Come Easter time, there are pilgrimages to Palestine to go to the sepulchre, and to go to this, and to go to that. Now what's the merit of a pilgrimage? It helps you to heaven. It gains you merit with God. You have made a walk to a sacred place, and that redounds to your benefit. We're not talking about something that happened only in Babylon. We're talking about something that people spend hundreds and thousands of dollars to do today. One of the favorite ways of washing away sin in the Middle Ages was by a pilgrimage to the tomb of a saint – pilgrimages to holy places. Where in Scripture do you have the slightest suggestion of merit or power in visiting the tomb of some saint, or some martyr, or some prophet, or some apostle?

The Jews were very much inclined to follow the heathen religious practices, as you know. This is probably one of the reasons that God saw to it that they didn't have the body of Moses. Could you imagine what the Jews would have done with the body of Moses? Man, what a relic you would have had there, once you got him dried up and his bones taken out. What a place of pilgrimage you could have formed where you buried him. We know the Jews were just so inclined. That Exodus generation was just so inclined to follow the heathen practices. That was the reason that the golden calf was so easy for them. These animal gods were what they knew in Egypt. They watched this. They saw this. The minute they thought Moses was dead, what did they go back to? The animal gods: "Make us a golden calf. That's the god we worshiped in Egypt. We'll worship it here." It was easy for them. Boy, they would have made a relic of Moses like you wouldn't believe.

These ancient pilgrimages, unfortunately, were often associated with unrestrained immoral revelries. But then that's not entirely bad. As you have learned from listening to people who've been formerly in witchcraft and who have been followers of Satan, the cardinal principle of Satanism is that Satan got a wrong deal. He got a raw deal. He was wrongly accused by God. He was wrongly removed from his place of authority. But Satanism teaches that someday Satan is going to be restored to his place of authority. But the way that is going to come about is when the world is immersed in evil so that evil is rampant in the world. Then the world will realize how enjoyable it is to follow Satan's principles, and they will see how wrong God was to take Satan's authority away from him. So that's why the pilgrimages often were associated with great immoralities.

Thus, the Roman Catholic system, instead of pointing people to faith in Jesus Christ, followed the Babylonian leader of pointing people to faith in relics. This is one of the problems that Martin Luther had to deal with – to break the idea that people should place their faith in relics in order to bring them to God, instead of in Christ, who is the only channel to God.

**Penitential Processions**

One of the things that the latest bulletin of the Central American Mission described was the processions which were held in Central America at the Easter season. Here is another Roman Catholic practice which is widespread: processions. This is one form of Roman Catholic veneration worship, and that is the carrying of a religious image in a procession as an appeal for divine blessings. They're often called penitential processions. I've been in Guatemala where I've seen the Santo Thomas Church where the witch doctors do their stuff, and the Roman Catholic priests do their stuff right in the same thing. It's hard to tell the difference between one and the other. I have seen the pagans of Guatemala come down the steps of the Roman Catholic Church and walk across the courtyard, and go up the steps of the heathen place of worship, carrying the Virgin Mary, and carrying the Saints, and going with the music in a very solemn processional. This was done very dramatically to impress the sight of people, to impress the hearing of people; and, to awe the followers.

This was done again throughout the ancient world. These religious professionals were born in Babylon. And it is done to this day. Usually, as the one that Central American Mission described, it takes on a large platform and a great number of men who put that platform on their shoulders and then they walk through the streets in a very slow and a very funeral-like accompaniment of music. On this particular occasion in Central America was a glass casket in which lay a life-size image of the dead Christ. And it is a very impressive sight because the men can't just walk forward. If they just walked forward like that, their shoulders would tip, and they would knock the images off. So they have to make what is a crosswalk. They cross one way, and then they cross the other way. By walking cross-legged, their forward motion is slowed down considerably, but the platform stays steady. But it's a very impressive sight to see this crossing of legs. If Hitler had ever seen that, he would have cut his wrists and had his soldiers goose-stepping with the cross-step.

But out of Babylonian paganism again, here we have something to impress the people that God is there, and they're getting to Him with merit. The emotions of the devotees are moved, of course, by a spectacle like this. It creates a great devotion to the Roman Catholic Church, which is considered as an equivalent to devotion to God. These practices are with us to this day. The religious procession of idols was introduced in 590 by Pope Gregory the Great because the city of Rome was under a plague. People were dying. So he instituted the pagan practice of the processional. Usually it's carrying, as he ordered, an image of the Virgin Mary. What this suggests is that God could be moved by a sensuous spectacle instead of by His integrity. It suggests that God would look from heaven, and God would say, "Oh, I'm so moved. You're carrying the statue of the Virgin Mary. You're carrying the statue of My dead Son in a glass casket there on the platform. I'm so moved. I'm going to bless you. I'm going to stop the plague."

The heathen prototype, of course, was there before in the Babylonian mystery religions. They did the same thing. They had the same processions. I know that some of you are going to come up and say, "Well, how about that procession around the city of Jericho, with the priests and carrying the ark in front of it? Isn't that the same thing? What about David when he was moving the ark from Kiriath-Jearim to be placed in Jerusalem? Wasn't that a procession?" Well, I think you can see if you read the Scripture that neither one of those was done as merit from God. One was a technique of warfare which God directed. The other was simply a dignified transfer, once and for all, of the Ark of the Covenant to a new resting place. None of these Old Testament incidents remotely refer to what the Roman Catholic system means.

But I will tell you something. The Word of God condemns this practice of carrying images in processions. Again, the Jews loved it. The Jews just could not keep their hands off of heathen practices. So, Isaiah 46:5-8 says, "To whom will you liken Me," God says, "and make Me equal and compare Me that we may be alike? They (the heathen) lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a God. They fall down. Yea, they worship. They bear it upon the shoulder. They carry it, and set it in its place, and it stands there. It does not move from its place. Yea, one shall cry onto it, yet it cannot answer nor see him out of his trouble. Remember this, and show yourselves men. Bring it again to mind, O you transgressors." Isaiah was trying to tell these Jews: "You stupid people. You're following the Babylonian mystery cult custom of putting up an idol god and carrying it upon your shoulders. And the Word of God condemns that."

Incidentally, ancient art is filled, again, with examples of these religious processions bearing gods on a platform. Again and again, in sculpture and in the drawings of ancient times, you have these processions. We know it took place. We're not imagining these things. The historians report it accurately.

**The Rosary of the Sacred Heart**

Let me give you one more: the Rosary and the Sacred Heart. The rosary is a string of various beads to direct the worshiper in saying prayers. These prayers are viewed as having value only because you repeat them, and they gain you merit with God. The system is mechanically performed. It is very similar to the prayer wheel, again, of the pagan systems. The rosary was very, very prominent in the Babylonian system, and in the ancient world the rosary is found everywhere. This is the way the pagans prayed. They took their string of beads, and they would come to this shaped bead, and they would say this prayer. They would come to this shaped bead and they'd say this prayer. They would go through this string of beads saying their prayers. You look upon the statues like Diana of the Ephesians, and there is the rosary around her neck – the string of beads which is her prayer rosary. You find it everywhere in the ancient world. It violates the doctrinal principle that sinners are not heard by God by their much speaking. However, the Roman Catholic Church took this practice of the rosary system of prayer, and directed it specifically to Jesus Christ.

**Cupid**

Therefore, they added another factor to it called the Rosary of the Sacred Heart. Among the ancients, the sacred heart of their deity was worshiped. This is a thing that is very dear to the Roman Catholics – the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This, again, is the sacred heart of the child in the child and mother cult. Very often, therefore, in the images of the child, he's holding a heart in his hand. This child came to be viewed as the god of the heart or the god of love. His name was Cupid. Since he was the reincarnation of Nimrod, the great hunter, the child was, therefore, often given a bow and an arrow in his hand, and he was described by the poets then as taking those golden arrows and shooting them into the heart of a person, so the person fell in love. This was Cupid. All of you Valentine devotees might like to know that the next time you send out a Valentine with a little fat-like boy with wings floating around that's got a big heart hanging around his neck, and a little bow and an arrow that he's going to shoot. Just remember that you are saying, "Hail Tammuz. Hail cupid – wonderful god descended of Nimrod reincarnated with his mother as the mother and child god."

So the heart was venerated among the pagans as the symbol of the sun-god. It was one of those secret symbols. When they saw the heart, they said, "I know what you're talking about. You're talking about our god, the sun-god. Because it was a reference to the sun-god, there was another feature – that this heart was presented in the form of a flame. That was the shape of the heart – in the form of a flame. Very often in ancient art, you see the sacred heart in a religious object in the form of a flame. Guess how often Roman Catholics portray the heart – the sacred heart of Jesus, just like that: in the form of flames? Why? Because it's directly representing the old sun-god here that we've been talking about, up in the sky. The flame is connected with him. Well, it should be connected with heat, but they're connecting it with the heat in the wrong place. It is connected with the heat of the lake of fire. It is a very fitting symbol of that.

So this came from the fact that when Nimrod was cut up into those 14 pieces, somebody saved his heart. When they restored him, they took the heart, and the heart brought about the reincarnation of Nimrod in the form of Cupid. The result was that this became a symbol of new birth. The Roman Catholics venerate this flaming heart of Nimrod, and they present it as the new birth through the heart of Jesus Christ. They are devoted exceedingly to this gross paganism.

Well, there is so much more. I don't know if I can even cover all of it with you: the wax candles; the lights; the holy water; and, everything else that goes with it. But I hope by now you just have a feeling of understanding of what the Pergamum letter is all about. This was a church that no longer had to stand under persecution, and it was a church that was highly tempted to accommodate to paganism, and it did. It just drew paganism into its bosom. And you and I look at these systems in the Roman Catholic Church, and we shake our heads and say, "Now, wait a minute, how can you say this? What do you get a thing like that? What does that come from in the Bible?" Well, now you know not to ask that question. Now you'll know that what you're seeing in Roman Catholicism is pure Babylonian mystery cult satanic worship of the sun-god practices. That's where they came from. That's what they signify. Biblical names have been attached to it.

So the system is evil. And for religious leaders to suggest that we have fellowship with such a system is a travesty and a blasphemy before Almighty God. These things were terrible that came out of Babylon. They were just as terrible when they entered the church of the Middle Ages, and they are just as terrible today. You can go ahead and accommodate if you want to. But just be aware of the fact that some day out in eternity, some soul may look to you and say, "For years, perhaps, you kept me from salvation until God overrode you, because you did not make it clear to me that I was in a pagan system. Until God and His grace led me to that understanding, I wasted years of my life." May God never have to set that upon your record, because you should know better now.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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