

THE IMPACT OF CATHOLICISM

The impact of Catholicism is vast. It has permeated the world for centuries and its effects continue to discourage religious investigation by those who have been impacted. Having been raised a Catholic, I remember the impact of the paganistic rituals and vain worship practices. To be commanded in religious exercises that are not justified through Divine ordinances, while yet at the same time being told that such practices are to be followed on the basis of it being commanded by the "first church," left me confused and lost. Many practices such as praying repetitious prayers with rosary beads, the veneration of Mary, and the special regard of "saints" was founded on the basis of paganistic idolatry. Therefore, it is no wonder why a Catholic might question the reasoning and purpose behind such religious exercises, additionally feeling lost when told it is to be done simply because it is being commanded by the "first church." A Catholic may know that God exists, but because of the impact of Catholicism may become repulsed by any organized form of worship or religious exercise. Therefore, the origination and explanation of these Catholic practices and beliefs must be understood so that pure religion can indeed be encouraged and the first, real New Testament church can begin to be realized.

Intertwining Pagan Rituals into Christianity

The Catholic Church has a history of embracing the world rather than converting it. The mission: "To convert and civilize her new subjects she descended to their level and employed means in keeping with their notions and customs" (History of the Church of God, B. J. Spalding, 407 AS QUOTED IN Catholicism Against Itself V I, O.C. Lambert, 140). Rather than keeping the church pure from paganism, the Catholic Church intertwined such in order to promote and retain membership. For example, the rosary was not originally Catholic as stated by their own Encyclopedia: "The use of beads among pagans is undoubtedly of greater antiquity than their Christian use" (Catholic Encyclopedia, II, 362 AS QUOTED IN Catholicism Against Itself V I, O.C. Lambert, 140). The use of the rosary beads were to allow within the Catholic Church that which idolatrous nations had used for centuries. "It has been and always will be the intent and tradition of the Apostolic See, to make a large allowance in all that is right and good, for the primitive traditions and the special customs of every nation" (Great Encyclopedia Letters of Leo XIII, 308 AS QUOTED IN Catholicism Against Itself V I, O.C. Lambert, 140).

Consider the timeline and process of making Mary a figure of veneration as it is documented by Joanne Howe:

“When the Emperor Constantine declared Christianity a national religion, many of the converts brought with them their pagan idolatries, especially their worship of the pagan goddesses Isis and Diana. To satisfy the superstitious minds of these former heathens, Mary was introduced as a powerful intercessor that could equal and even surpass the supposed powers of these goddesses. To further satisfy these converts, statues of the

Blessed Virgin were made before which they could kneel and pray for her intercession just as they did before their pagan goddesses.”

Ralph Woodrow, in his book *Babylon Mystery Religion*, presents a history of various goddesses whose statues of mother and child were worshiped by different cultures. He also states that 'in the page religions, the mother was worshiped as much (or more) than her son' (p.21). The church at Ephesus encouraged worship to Mary calling her the 'Mother of God' (theotokos is the term used for 'Mother of God' meaning godbearer). The Council of Ephesus decreed that Mary should be worshiped, making it an official doctrine in A.D. 431. Woodrow states further:

It was in this city that Diana had been worshiped as the goddess of virginity and motherhood from primitive times. She was said to represent the generative powers of nature and so was pictured with many breasts. A tower- shaped crown, a symbol of the tower of Babel, adorned her head.

When beliefs are held by a people for centuries, they are not easily forsaken. So church leaders at Ephesus – as the falling away came – also reasoned that if people would be allowed to hold their ideas about a mother goddess, if this could be mixed into Christianity and the name Mary substituted, they could gain more converts. But this was not God's method. When Paul had come to Ephesus in earlier days, no compromise was made with paganism. People were truly converted and destroyed their idols of the goddess (Acts 19:24-27). How tragic that the church at Ephesus in later centuries compromised and adopted a form of mother goddess worship, the Council of Ephesus finally making it an official doctrine!

With the passing of the centuries, adoration and veneration of Mary grew and gradually became crystallized by the Roman Catholic Church into a system of dogmas under the term of 'Mariology' (*Babylon Mystery Religion*, Ralph Woodrow, 21-26 AS CITED AND QUOTED IN *From Nun to Priest: Hope for Those Bound By Tradition*, Joanne Howe, 91-92).

These forms of paganistic rituals that have crept into Catholicism over the centuries have caused the identity of the Catholic Church to become clouded. Rather than Catholicism being a light unto the world, it has become the world's religious melting pot. Its lack of distinction and baseless reasoning for such religious practices has impacted the religious appetite of many who desire to understand and know God. Undoubtedly, many sincere people looking for the truth of the scriptures instead found the Catholic Church and their traditions, many of which contradict the truth the seeker was inquiring.

Dismissing Biblical Authority

While those who question such paganistic practices that have been morphed into Catholic exercises, the hierarchy of Catholicism has forbidden the use of Biblical investigation in order to do so. "From all of which it must be abundantly clear that the Bible alone is not a safe and competent guide because it is not now and has never been accessible to all, because it is not clear and intelligible to all, and because it does not contain all the truth of the Christian religion" (Finding Christ's Church, John A. O'Brien, 20 AS QUOTED IN Catholicism Against Itself V II, O.C. Lambert, 23). "The very nature of the Bible ought to prove to any thinking man the impossibility of its being the one safe method to find out what the Saviour taught" (Question Box, 67, 1913 Edition AS QUOTED IN Catholicism Against Itself V I, O.C. Lambert, 23).

A rejection of Biblical authority is required for Catholicism to remain as it is. The Bible is indeed an enemy of Catholicism as it clearly condemns the authority (cf. Col. 3:17); organization (cf. Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Mat. 23:9) and worship (cf. John 4:23-24; Col. 2:8; Acts 17:24-25) of the Catholic Church. When the Catholic church rejects the Bible as being authoritative, then it's adherents are impacted because they are left enslaved (cf. John 8:32) and without life (cf. John 6:63; 2 Pet. 1:3).

Promoting Ignorance Through Total Dependence

As investigation and study of the Bible is rejected, ignorance is then promoted, but also dependence upon another source for spiritual guidance is also commanded. Efforts to understand spiritual truth must always be monitored by the Catholic Church. In the early days of Catholicism, even if one wanted to read the Bible, he could not do so unless he obtained written permission by an approved source of the Catholic hierarchy:

Since it is clear from experience that if the Sacred Books are permitted everywhere and without discrimination in the vernacular, there will by reason of the boldness of men arise therefrom more harm than good, the matter is in this respect left to the judgment of the bishop or inquisitor, who may with the advice of the pastor or confessor permit the reading of the Sacred Books translated into the vernacular by the Catholic authors to those who they know will derive from such reading no harm but rather an increase of faith and piety, which permission they must have in writing. Those, however, who presume to read or possess them without such permission may not receive absolution from their sins till they have handed them over to the ordinary" (Fourth rule concerning prohibited books, by Council of Trent, and approved by Pius IV, 1563 A.D., translated by H. J. Shroeder, Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, 274 AS QUOTED IN Catholicism Against Itself V I, O.C. Lambert, 32).

Refusal to obtain written permission and any attempts to read the Bible for one's own self resulted in punishment. This policy is one held from the top down and throughout the history of the Catholic church. "The Bible is not to be read by all; the Pope forbids it; all must not read it"

(Catholic Dictionary, 82 AS CITED IN Traditions of Men Verses the Word of God, Alvin Jennings, 10).

Since the Bible cannot be accessed by all, another source is provided to Catholics to have their questions answered, and this source is the Catholic priesthood. "The priest is 'another Christ,' the means of access between the sinner and God ... "who holds the place God" (True Spouse of Christ, St. Ligouri, 93 AS CITED AND QUOTED IN Traditions of Men Verses the Word of God, Alvin Jennings, 13). These men of the Catholic clergy stand in place of God to comfort the Catholic who may have questions regarding spirituality. Catholics themselves cannot be trusted to study the scriptures; however, priests will grant answers and proper understandings of what is needful to an inquisitive Catholic. The impact of these policies are detrimental. Not only is such an approach unbiblical (cf. John 5:39; Eph. 3:4), but it also encourages a proxy approach to spirituality. Catholics are left under the impression that they cannot of themselves really know right from wrong and how to discern eternal truths, but that if they simply trust in other men (not questioning them because they are the authority), then they will be fine spiritually. Such religious requirements upon any people hamper the hunger and thirst that is encouraged by the Lord so that spiritual fulfillment can be obtained (cf. Matt. 5:6)

Suppression Of Religious Investigation.

The suppression of religious inquisitiveness is one of the greatest impacts of Catholicism. Too often, those mildly familiar with Christendom, believe that the Catholic Church is the first church and all others are in protest (hence the term Protestant). Therefore, it is believed that one must either choose between the "first and only real church" or the other churches that have attempted to fix what is blatantly wrong with the first church. Some make their choice, and find various avenues of justification for doing such, while others will view the religious terrain of Christendom, know that such division is not desired by the Lord, shrug their shoulders and give up. It must be emphasized that the confusion that exists because of the impact of Catholicism in no way excuses those that discover such and give up. After all, Jesus stated, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Mat. 7:7-8).

Review Questions

- Question 1) How does Romans 12:2 relate to the paganizing of the Catholic Church?
- Question 2) What is the origin of the rosary and what justification is offered by Catholic authorities as to why it is used?
- Question 3) Explain how Mary came to the position of being venerated within the Catholic church?
- Question 4) What type of language is used to describe the Bible by Catholic authorities?

Question 5) Discuss John 16:13; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3 in light of the Catholic claim that the Bible does not contain all necessary truth.

Question 6) Why would the Catholic Church oppose the study and use of the Bible.

Question 7) What was required in the early days of the Catholic Church if one wanted to read the Bible?

Question 8) What is used in "place of" the Bible for Catholic members?

Question 9) Explain how a Catholic's "spiritual investigation" would be hampered due to the policies of the Catholic Church.

Question 10) Although Catholics are being blindly led, are they then given an excuse for remaining in such a state (cf. Matt. 15:14; 2 Cor. 5:10)? Do we have an excuse for not telling Catholics the truth (cf. Eze. 3:18-19)?



Works Cited

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