



Berean Beacon

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Isaiah 9:2

The Perilous Fondness for the Papacy

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6)

By Richard Bennett

Richard Bennett was born into a devout Roman Catholic home in Dublin Ireland. His early years were spent in Belvedere Jesuit School. Eight years of theological instruction for the priesthood followed under the instruction of the Dominican Order with his formal education culminating in 1964 at the Angelicum University of Rome.

As a young priest, Richard was assigned to the West Indies. He spent the next twenty-one years in Trinidad, mostly serving as a parish priest applying Roman Catholic teaching to everyday life. After a serious accident in which he nearly lost his life, he began to seriously study the Scriptures. After fourteen years of contrasting the teachings of Rome with biblical truth, he was convicted by the Gospel message through God's grace alone and in 1986 he formally left the Roman Catholic Church and its priesthood.

Richard has since founded an evangelistic ministry called 'Berean Beacon' which brings the truth of God's plan of salvation to many worldwide.

Autobiographical accounts of Richard's life can be found in his *Catholicism: East of Eden – Insights into Catholicism for the 21st Century* (Banner of Truth, 2010) and (with Martin Buckingham) *Far from Rome, Near to God – Testimonies of Fifty Converted Roman Catholic Priests* (Banner of Truth, 1997).

Dear Friend,

The greatest warning of the Lord Christ Jesus was that which He gave against apostasy. Likewise, the infallible Spirit of God testifies to the danger of apostasy, through the Apostles Paul, Peter and John. (Matthew 7:15, 24:24-25; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-2, Acts 20:29, 2 Peter 2:1) The final warning in Revelation Chapter Seventeen is the Word of God for the present day. To sidestep the Apostate Church, which is the greatest evil, and focus on such problems as secular humanism, atheism and spiritual nihilism, denies the One who gave the warning and the very Holy Spirit who highlights it in His Word.

Trusting in the love and truth of the power *"that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,"* it is with expectancy that I post out this article.

Yours in the Lord's truth and love,

Richard Bennett

The Roman Pontiff and his Church demand respect and obedience throughout the world. The world in response shows a great fondness for the Pope as he addresses and admonishes world leaders and makes declarations on all major events. For example, the official Vatican Information Service on June 4, 2004 reported the explicit rebuke that the Pope gave to President Bush, “‘Your visit to Rome,’ said the Pope, ‘takes place at a moment of great concern for the continuing situation of grave unrest in the Middle East, both in Iraq and in the Holy Land. You are very familiar with the unequivocal position of the Holy See in this regard, expressed in numerous documents, through direct and indirect contacts, and in the many diplomatic efforts which have been made since you visited me in 2001.’”¹

The Pope’s central authority, by which he judges all things, is officially called by the term “Holy See” rather than “the Vatican”. The Vatican’s webpage states, “The term Holy See stands for the central authority of the Church, which transcends, even if it includes, the tiny sovereign State of Vatican City. Thus, the Holy See represents a world wide community and not only the citizens of Vatican City.”² The Pope is the head of a sovereign state and at the same time a central authority to a worldwide community. In an insightful official law the same Holy See declares, “The First See is judged by no one.”³ The Papacy declares itself to be supreme, accountable to no one, the sole judge of what is right and wrong, while simultaneously demanding that no one can judge it. The audacity of the Holy See reaches its zenith in the civil and political arenas as it proclaims “It is solely the right of the Roman Pontiff himself to judge...those who hold the highest civil office in a state...”⁴ One of the Holy See’s hallmark is that of judging those who lead nations.

Most people do not regard as the Papacy as a civil power and have even less knowledge of how it exercises its power through civil law⁵ It is often accomplished by what is called a “concordat”. A concordat is a contract that legally binds the nation involved and the Holy See. It guarantees the Roman Catholic Church the right of freedom of religion and worship, the right to define doctrine, establish Roman Catholic education, negotiate laws regarding property, appoint bishops, and to require recognition of Roman Catholic law regarding marriage and annulment. In the twentieth century, some of the main concordats were with Latvia (1922), Bavaria (1924), Poland (1925), Romania (1927), Lithuania (1927), Italy (1929), Prussia (1929), Baden (1932), Austria (1933), Germany (1933) and Yugoslavia (1935). These concordats protected all things Roman Catholic, such as schools, hospitals, and institutions, often run with public funds. Discrimination and harassment of institutions not Roman Catholic has been evidenced in all these nations. The Vatican’s relations with Roman Catholic dictators in the same century were evidenced by her preference of dictators within her own fold. Some of these have been Adolf Hitler in Germany, 1933-1945; Benito Mussolini in Italy, 1922-1943; Francisco Franco in Spain, 1936-1975; Antonio Salazar in Portugal, 1932-1968; Juan Peron in Argentina, 1946-1955; and Ante Pavelic in Croatia, 1941-1945.

On June 20, 2000 under the heading, “Virtually All Countries Have Signed Concordats with Rome” the Catholic news agency Zenit reported,

“The desire of countries around the world to maintain stable relations with the Vatican is greater than ever. This is reflected in the extraordinary number of “concordats” that Rome has signed with other capitals over the last few years. From 1950 to 1999, 128 concordats were signed between Rome and different States. This figure was disclosed during an international congress

organized by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, which presented in one volume all the concordats signed over the last 50 years. In the past 9 years, 43 concordats were signed between the Vatican and other States. In part, this significant figure is due to the fact that, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the former communist countries hastened to establish diplomatic relations with Rome, in order to change the Church's illegal status. This has led other nations of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa to knock on Rome's door and enter judicial agreements. This marathon has implied an average of 19 concordats a year. Prior to 1989, the Vatican signed international agreements primarily with European and Latin American countries."⁶

The Holy See's Political Power

One may ask of what importance are these concordats, and how do they affect the lives of people in the nations involved? Recent history answers that. The Papacy through concordats supported and collaborated with both the Mussolini and Hitler regimes, as well as setting up its own totalitarian state in Croatia during the Second World War. The Vatican's legal agreement with Fascism of Italy, Spain, Portugal, Croatia, and Latin America were lived out in the economic and social conditions of these nations.⁷ "Freedom of religion" in those nations was interpreted as freedom for the Roman Catholic religion and those who joined together in false ecumenism with her. With concordats established and Catholic law recognized in civil law in many more nations than before, true believers should take heed.

Since the Holy See defines what is not a legitimate church, "the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, are not Churches in the proper sense...."⁸, her power and influence needs to be strongly and continually challenged in both the religious and civil spheres in any nation. That she is a hovering menace to Bible believers can be seen presently in the European Union (EU), where non-ecumenical Bible believing churches are already being designated as sects, worthy of being watched by the civil government. If the Papacy has its way, the new EU constitution will recall the Christian roots of European heritage. This will provide a wedge for the Vatican to insist upon its legal status in the EU, once again starting the engines of a state church, this time for the whole EU.⁹

That the world refuses to learn from the experiences of history is to be expected; but now, likewise, New Evangelicals are hastening Romeward. The *New York Times* May 30, 2004 carried news of the alliance between Catholicism and Evangelicals that is restructuring America.

"In 1960, the last time a Roman Catholic ran for president on the Democratic ticket, evangelical Protestant leaders warned their flocks that electing John F. Kennedy would be like handing the Oval Office to the Antichrist....Forty-four years later...Evangelicals and conservative Catholics have forged an alliance that is reshaping American politics and culture....Exactly 10 years ago, a group of Evangelical and Catholic leaders and scholars released a document called 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together.' It was the result of a dialogue started by two men: the Rev. Richard John Neuhaus, a Catholic priest in New York who edits the journal *First Things*, and Charles Colson....The two men convened a group of prominent theologians and religious leaders. The Evangelical side included the late Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, the religious broadcaster Pat Robertson and theologians like James I. Packer. The Catholic side

included the late Cardinal John O'Connor of New York and the theologian Avery Dulles, now a cardinal. Their manifesto was primarily theological, but it included overt political pledges to work together on issues like abortion, government aid for religious schools and strengthening the 'traditional family,' in part a reaction to the growing gay rights movement. The document shook the Evangelical world....By 2000, Mr. Colson and James Dobson, the broadcaster who founded Focus on the Family, were invited to the Vatican to address the bishops on the breakdown of the family, the first such appearance ever. Evangelical institutions like Wheaton College in Illinois and Gordon College in Massachusetts began inviting Catholics to speak on campus, Mr. Colson said.¹⁰

As the world and false Evangelicals join hands in the dark with the Vatican, it affords immediate opportunity to contemplate what Scripture says about the nature of apostasy. It is appropriate also to understand how true believers of former times viewed their relationship with the Vatican.

Overview of the Apostate Church

The Holy Spirit in Revelation Chapter Seventeen vividly depicts the features of the Apostate Church. It is done in graphically precise detail. The Apostle John beheld the ten-horned beast carrying a woman dressed in purple and scarlet, decked with gold, precious stones, and pearls, a harlot, and the mother of harlots and abominations. She is the paramour of kings, merciless, cruel, intoxicated with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Christ Jesus. These symbols are brilliantly portrayed. *"The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth"* (v 9). This the Holy Spirit clarifies by proclaiming, *"the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth"* (v 18). The city indisputably is Rome. The name upon the harlot's brow is "mystery" (v 5). She cannot be heathen Rome of which there was no mystery because her character was never concealed. "Christian" Rome, however, is a mystery, for she is not what she appears. Babylon, in the book of Revelation, is a city and a harlot. Jerusalem, in the same book, is a city and a bride. Babylon is the fraudulent lover of earthly kings; Jerusalem, the chaste bride of the King of Kings. The contrast is between the faithful Church and the Apostate Church. Chapter Seventeen thus describes in detail the character of the Apostate Church.¹¹

Religious power seated on civil power

The woman is seen *"sitting upon the scarlet-colored beast"* (v. 3). The woman, the Papal Church, is seated upon a scarlet-colored beast, the civil power. She controls and directs for her own ends the civil power on which she rides. The political civil power is subordinate to the spiritual control of apostate Rome and is the Pope's necessary instrument used to fulfill his aspirations and objectives. This is exactly the history of the Papal Church.

The Papal Church arose through the favor of the Emperors of the old Imperial Roman Empire. Constantine who in 313 AD declared Christianity to be the state religion of Imperial Rome set the stage for this. Before that time, the church was the fellowship of believers under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ, working under their pastors by the authority the written Word as received in the gospel accounts of the life of the Lord, and the writings of the Apostles together with the

Old Testament. The church by Constantine's design, however, was to be organized and governed on the Imperial Roman Empire model. Thus was governance of the church divided into four great provinces and a bishop in each province elevated above his brothers.¹² Historically, the power of the Bishop of Rome increased as the imperial power of the Emperor declined. Besides Justinian's edict in 538 AD, the edicts of the Emperors Theodosius II and Valentinian III proclaimed the Roman Bishop "as Rector of the whole Church."¹³ So it is that by the edicts of civil powers, with the sanction of the Italian bishops, the Roman Bishop became the head of the Western clergy. By this time, however, the demise of the Imperial Roman Empire was at hand, and one might have thought that the state church would fall with the Empire. The Bishop of Rome, however, claimed an authority on a higher than that given by civil power, in order that his position would be secure perpetually. Skillfully he grasped to himself the ideal tool, the title of successor to the Apostle Peter, through which he claimed himself to have been invested with the authority of Holy God. In doing this, he rose to a position far above that of mere patriarchs and emperors. Wylie summarizes,

"With the assertion of this dogma the system of the Papacy was completed essentially and doctrinally, but not as yet practically. It had to wait the full development of the idea of vicarship, which was not till the days of Gregory VII [Hildebrand, 1073-85]. But here have we the embryotic seed — the vicarship to wit — out of which the vast structure of the Papacy has sprung. This it is that plants at the centre of the system a pseudo-divine jurisdiction, and places the Pope above all bishops with their flocks, above all kings with their subjects. This it is that gives the Pope two swords....The day when this dogma was proclaimed was the true birthday of the Popedom. The Bishop of Rome had till now sat in the seat of Caesar; henceforward he was to sit in the seat of God."¹⁴

To do this, of course, required intrigue, deceit, suppression of the Bible and the Gospel — all of which was accomplished over the course of time so that by the time of the great Reformers of the sixteenth century, it was clearly understood that the Papal church was the woman who rides the beast. Among us today is this same church, the Roman Catholic Church, still claiming the same authority and still pursuing the same agenda.

In Daniel chapter seven, the little horn, symbolizing the papacy, persecuted the saints¹⁵ and spoke against God "the most High"¹⁶ but would come to its end at the termination of 1260 years.¹⁷ That occurred in 1798 with the arrest of Pope Pius VI in the wounding of its head, 1260 years after Justinian's edict of 538 AD. The Papal Church languished and lost its civil power for decades. Revelation chapter thirteen explains however, a second rise of this same political-ecclesiastical institution as a last day power, "*And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.*"¹⁸ This came to fruition, just as Scripture had foretold. In 1929 Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty with Pope Pius XI officially conceding Vaticanus Mons (Vatican Hill) from the nation of Italy to the Pope. The wound was healed! At the hand of civil power, the Papal Church had once again sprung forth as a landed theocracy, still claiming for her Pope the titles of Successor to the Apostle Peter and Vicar of Christ.

While she became the smallest independent state in the world (108 acres) she again has become one of the greatest in political intrigue, in the words of Lord Acton "the fiend skulking behind

the Crucifix.”¹⁹ Because she is established on civil power and as a sovereign state, she wields much sway in national and international law, particularly in the nations in which she has papal nuncios as ambassadors. At present she maintains civil relations with 172 countries at Embassy level. According to the *Catholic Almanac*, “An apostolic nuncio has the diplomatic rank of ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary...a nuncio has precedence among diplomats in the country to which he is accredited and serves as dean of the diplomatic corps on state occasions.”²⁰ The history of Papal Rome, her seeming demise, and her present day position in the world, show that she fits what the Holy Spirit revealed Revelation 17.

Significance of place, attire, and possessions

The place of residence of the Papal church was never in doubt, “*the seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth*” (v. 9). The system itself still delineates the area of residence of the Papal State, “...It is within the city of Rome, called the city of seven hills, that the entire area of Vatican State proper now is confined...”²¹ The revelation of God shows forth the attire and possessions of the Apostate system, “*And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication*” (v. 4). Scarlet, the usual color of the robes of kings and military men, was and still is the favorite color of Papal Rome. Cardinals for example, are clothed all in scarlet. Papal patriarchs, metropolitan archbishops, archbishops and bishops wear purple and “the Pectoral cross”. “The Pectoral cross” is declared by Rome to be “decorated with gems; that of a bishop usually contains relics of a martyr.”²² Papal Rome has the “*the golden cup*” in the chalice on her altar, which must be gold or gold-plated. Biblically, gold represents perfection and the things of God. Deceptively Rome offers a “pure” outward display, but of her Eucharistic use of that golden cup she states, “...in the sacrifice of the Mass Our Lord is immolated.”²³ In Scripture Lord Jesus Christ’s perfect sacrifice was once offered.²⁴ Thus the golden cup she holds out as the center of her worship to God is filled with the most odious of abominations, an apt image to denote her idolatry and superstition.

Description of the inner character

Verse 5 delineates her inner character “*upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*” She is called “great” because of the scale of the Papal influence, and because of the multitude of kings, princes, and presidents with whom she has done business. The Papal Church is also invested with the title, “*Mystery Babylon the Great*”. Throughout her history she has been an enigma. She continues to be so, even to those within her own system. Truly God’s Word describes her as a “*Mystery*”. She is also called “*Babylon*” as she is the exact antitype of the ancient Babylon in her idolatry and cruelty. Babylon of old was only a miniature pastel portrait of her. “*Babylon the great*” titles herself as “Holy Mother Church”.²⁵ She has the audacity to proclaim, ““No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother.””²⁶ In truth the Bible has revealed her inner character as, “*the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*” (v. 5). The Pope and his Church bring into the worship of God the worship of the communion bread²⁷ and Mary as ““Mother of Mercy, the All Holy One,””²⁸ with the Pope himself designated as “Most Holy”.²⁹ The traditions of “Holy Mother Church” also bring into the worship of God the frustrated lives of celibate men and women, and worst of all, it brings in the

idolatry which God hates.³⁰ Icons and saints' bones alike are venerated as relics.³¹ Papal Rome encourages people to contact the dead. She teaches, "In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead...Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping 'them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.'"³² As the promoter of lewdness through the institutions of her unholy traditions, there never was a more expressive or appropriate title applied to her than that penned by Holy Spirit through the Apostle John.

Her history of persecution of true believers

The Roman Church has employed kings and princes in her work of persecution. Her courts first tried and condemned the believers, after which they were delivered over to the civil authority to be executed. In the Papacy's crusades against Bible believing cities, towns and territories, Rome enlisted the civil power of kings and potentates to carry out her cruel deeds. In those many years, the Papal system was "*drunken with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs*" (v. 6). The Crusades against the Albigenses, the Vaudois, and the Waldenses were replete with outrageous slaughters and barbarities. The individual hounding down of true believers that resulted in atrocious torture and death is the documented history of the state religion of the Papacy. For centuries through her Office of the Inquisition, she organized wars against Bible believing cities and territories. In the middle of the thirteenth century, Pope Innocent IV devised in detail for the many inquisitors how torture was to be perpetrated. "Innocent IV gave comprehensive instructions regarding how torture was to be applied in his bull *At Extirpanda* (1252). This was revised and reissued by subsequent Popes. Torture is prescribed, but it was to stop short of pulling off limbs or causing death...Ruinous punishments are enacted on all who harbor or give advice or favor to a heretic. How completely the abominable system was the direct achievement of the Papacy is show by the clause that no change could be made without the special authority of the Apostolic See."³³

"From the birth of Popery in 600, to the present time, it is estimated by careful and credible historians, that more than **fifty millions** of the human family,³⁴ have been slaughtered for the crime of heresy by popish persecutors, an average of more than forty thousand religious murders for every year of the existence of Popery." Roman Catholic author, Peter de Rosa, wrote of the atrocities of the Roman Catholic torture machine,

"The record of the Inquisition would be embarrassing for any organization; for the Catholic Church, it is devastating. Today, it prides itself, and with much justification, on being the defender of natural law and the rights of man. The papacy in particular likes to see itself as the champion of morality. What history shows is that, for more than six centuries without a break, the papacy was the sworn enemy of elementary justice. Of eighty popes in a line from the thirteenth century on, not one of them disapproved of the theology and apparatus of Inquisition. On the contrary, one after another added his own cruel touches to the workings of this deadly machine."³⁶

The Papacy has shockingly fulfilled the image from Revelation of the woman blood-drenched from six centuries of her murderous rampage. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit foretold of her lust for power and blood. History has recorded some of the gruesome details.

The State of Affairs as it is at the Present Day

Papal Rome has stood in direct opposition to the Gospel of Christ and the judgment of God will come upon her. There never was a clearer duty than that of withdrawing from Papal Rome and her ecumenical followers. Her iniquity is corrupting and intoxicating the nations with a counterfeit head of the Church, a sham gospel, and will make her utter ruin the just and righteous act of God! The voice of the Lord comes back in thunder from the course of ages and reverberates throughout the world. *“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”*³⁷ The Woman sitting upon the scarlet-colored beast will continue and wax strong and draw to her bosom multitudes, and nations and power and glory of the world, as the Lord said she would. However the final condemnation of her and those within her is already written, *“Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”*³⁸ God’s reserved wrath, His punishing justice, and His enmity to sin, will be revealed to the entire world. The destruction of Papal Rome will proceed from the glory of His power. *“The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation;”*³⁹

In the meantime, the victory of the Gospel Word is seen for those who wait on Him. His power has always been greatest in the day of utmost need. Our prayerful duty is to fear the All Holy God, to obey His great commission, and to trust His victory now and hereafter, and to earnestly pray and desire that we are more and more conformed to be like unto Him the Lord! *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”*⁴⁰ Holiness consists in the believer’s conformity to the image of Christ.

Bible believers of old recognized the Apostate Church from the pages of Scripture and were prepared to both expose her and to face her, in the strength and wisdom of the Lord. Among others there were, Dante, John Wycliff, John Huss, and Savonarola. During the Reformation, Martin Luther, William Tyndale, John Calvin, Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, John Bradford, and John Foxe. In the 17th and 18th centuries such as John Bunyan, the translators of the King James Bible, and the men who published the Westminster and Baptist Confessions of Faith. Sir Isaac Newton, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley. In more recent times there were such as Charles Spurgeon, Bishop J. C. Ryle and Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones. All these men and many more knew the precision of Scriptures regarding both the true bride of Christ and the Apostate woman *“drunken with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs.”* The Written Word has been fulfilled in history, in both light and darkness. Like those believers of old we can enter into battle, because we have the secure proof that the Lord God is with us, and we will have the final victory. The words of the Apostle we repeat, *“...having done all, to stand. Stand therefore”*.⁴¹ The certainty of the final triumph should animate us in our efforts, and encourage us in our struggles. *“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs;*

*heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*⁴²