

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT



A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS & SECULAR MEDIA

SPECIAL REPORT

EVANGELICALS & CATHOLICS TOGETHER THE ECUMENICAL ACCORD IN LIGHT OF VATICAN II

by Albert James Dager

It appears as if the major agenda among most leaders in the Christian community today is ecumenism—the call for unity among all who name themselves as Christians, with special emphasis upon acceptance of Roman Catholicism. In some quarters even Mormons are being accepted on the basis of a common moral outlook.

Those in favor of ecumenism state that, while there are serious differences in how the faith is interpreted and practiced, the areas of agreement are sufficient to warrant overlooking those differences. The central theme has evolved into this: unity is necessary in order to demonstrate to the world that the evils rampant today will not be tolerated by a moral and religious majority.

While many Christians are buying into ecumenism, there remain a vocal few who are resisting the movement. These perceive sufficient errors in Roman Catholicism and Mormonism that preclude any attempts at spiritual unity. As a result, every attempt to achieve that unity results in division and alienation between the ecumenists and those who insist on maintaining the purity of the faith.

One of the major arguments for ecumenism is that there are already hundreds of denominations at odds with one another over doctrinal differences. Yet if Christ can accept them all, why can't we?

The issue, however, is not the differences among the denominations. The issue is the unity in the Spirit among all true believers, which exists *de facto* through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. His presence is a reality for only those who have surrendered their wills to the will of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The evidence of that faith is obedience to His Word as it is clearly stated in Scripture.

Mere verbal assent to truth is not in itself evidence of true faith. The ecclesiastical systems, regardless of their articles of faith, mean nothing. The Lord chooses men, not religious systems, for salvation. Yet true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ may be found within most churches.

While there is legitimate biblical authority vested in the autonomous local body of believers, the ecclesiastical systems that have arisen over the past centuries are merely part of the religious establishment of the world system. To one degree or another, they have all perverted God's Word, interpreting it along the lines of their founders' religious proclivities.

We do not wish to address the sincerity of their leaders, but the end result has been confusion. And the reason the religious systems have flourished is that most of their adherents do not know God's Word sufficiently to discern those areas in which their

particular movement's interpretations differ from the intended meaning of Scripture.

This is compounded by seminaries and Bible schools who turn out pastors stamped in the image of those professors who are most persuasive, whether along the hard lines of the denomination's beliefs, or their own personal beliefs. The result has been an outwardly fragmented Christianity that subsists on a diet of human wisdom mingled with a modicum of biblical truth—most of that truth addressing issues that seldom rise above the basics of the faith.

Even though Scripture is taught to some degree, most men cannot distinguish between God's Word and the aberrations taught in the churches. Thus many perceive a dichotomy within the true faith. They throw up their hands and ask, as did Pontius Pilate, "What is truth?"

Rejecting the pure Word of God, they give themselves over to all sorts of evils, resulting in a world that begs God's judgment. Those moral people who have remained in the churches likewise throw up their hands and ask, "What can we do about this evil world?" The answer from the religious leaders is "We must have unity in order to clean it up."

The moral agenda, then, becomes the means by which the world's religious people become neutralized against doctrinal error. The purity of the faith becomes secondary to achieving a united front against crime, pornography, homosexuality, drugs, abortion, and every other evil of which man's carnal mind conceives.

Thus, men who profess belief in every major tenet of the Christian faith, and are truly biblical in their understanding of the faith, become willing to set aside differences with those who share, not the biblical faith, but the same moral agenda. Such is the case with those who have endorsed *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*.

This document is the product of collaboration between evangelicals Chuck Colson and Dr. Kent Hill (of

Eastern Nazarene College) and two Roman Catholic priests, Richard John Neuhaus and Avery Dulles. It is the latest and most definitive call for unity between Roman Catholics and evangelicals. According to their press release dated March 29, 1994:

The declaration explains and celebrates "a pattern of convergence and cooperation" between Evangelicals and Catholics in shared Christian faith, common cultural and social tasks, and evangelistic commitment. Although encouraged by several institutions, the declaration is an unofficial document in which the participants speak from and to their several communities. It is hoped and expected that the document will have significant impact also in Latin America, Central Europe, and other areas of long-standing conflict between Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants. Toward that end, the declaration is being translated into several other languages.

Judgment as to the pros and cons of the declaration cannot be established upon the reading of this statement. A careful examination of the declaration itself is necessary to discern the agenda of those behind it.

To bring proper understanding, however, it is necessary to consider how Vatican II relates to this declaration, particularly on the subject of ecumenical unity.

This is especially important because many Christians today think that Vatican II changed the Roman Catholic Church's position on many important issues, and even doctrines. This is not true. Vatican II merely re-affirmed the Roman Catholic Church's position, but with a view toward reaching out to non-Catholics as a means to further their counter-reformation goals.

The new agenda for the counter-reformation is no longer antagonistic, but conciliatory toward anyone who might come back to "Mother Church." *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* serves that agenda well.

THE MISSION

In the Introduction to *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, we read:

We are Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics who have been led through prayer, study, and discussion to common convictions about Christian faith and mission.

Prayer, study and discussion are human attempts to come to an already agreed upon conclusion. Where did Scripture play a part in determining whether such a declaration is of the Lord? Was the "study" a study of Scripture? If so, how can there be "common convictions about Christian faith and missions"? The faith of Roman Catholicism is not biblical faith; there, salvation is not in the shed blood of Christ alone, but in the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. Outwardly professed belief in the blood atonement means nothing in view of the considerable doctrines that nullify that professed belief (see our special report, *Six Roman Catholic Doctrines that Nullify Salvation by Grace*).

Nor is the Roman Catholic mission the same as that of true believers. The mission to which every true believer is called is to proclaim faith in Jesus alone, making disciples of whomever will come to Him. The mission of the Roman Catholic Church is to bring as many people as possible into subjection to the pope—to make the world Roman Catholic.

Vatican II, in its documents on *Missionary Activity*, reveals that the agenda of the Roman Catholic mission is exclusively for the benefit of the Roman Catholic Church:

Hence, those cannot be saved, who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded through Jesus Christ, by God, as something necessary, still refuse to enter it, or to remain in it.¹

Salvation for the Roman Catholic Church rests not in Christ alone, but in the Roman Catholic sacraments as well. Yes, the Vatican would say, those who have not heard the Catholic claim may still be saved. But can evangelicals enter

into a common mission with Roman Catholics under such terms? At best, the agenda for *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* must result in a decree against preaching to Roman Catholics the true Gospel of salvation in Christ alone. This, in fact, is the case, as we shall see later.

STILL THE ONE, TRUE CHURCH?

All Roman Catholic bishops and priests—including the signatories and endorsers of this accord—are agents of the Vatican. Thus their understanding of ecumenism must be the same as that of their church: As Vatican II affirmed, ecumenism must be entered into for the benefit of the Roman Catholic Church:

This is the sole Church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Saviour, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care (Jn. 21:17), commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it (cf. Matt. 28:18, etc.), and which he raised up for all ages as "the pillar and mainstay of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside its visible confines. Since these are gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards Catholic unity.²

So the Roman Catholic Church acknowledges that "many elements of sanctification and truth are found" among other professing Christians. But these elements belong only to the Roman Catholic Church (allegedly the only true Church). Therefore, it is necessary that those possessing those elements be brought under the authority of the Roman pontiff. And all Roman Catholic involvement in the ecumenical movement must be entered with the purpose of advancing the Roman Catholic agenda:

Their ecumenical activity cannot be other than fully and sincerely Catholic, that is, loyal to the truth we have received from the Apostles and the Fathers, and in harmony with the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed, and at the same time tending toward that fullness in which our Lord wants his Body to grow in the course of time.³

Such actions, when they are carried out by the Catholic faithful with prudent patience and under the attentive guidance of their bishops, promote justice and truth, concord and collaboration, as well as the spirit of brotherly love and unity.⁴

While speaking of "brotherly love and unity," the Roman Catholic Church asserts in veiled language that "unity" means common celebration of the mass. This is borne out in Vatican II's declaration on unity:

The results will be that, little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only Church, which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.⁵ (emphasis ours)

Can the ecumenical intentions of the Roman Catholic Church be any more clear than this? Unity, we are told, "subsists in the Catholic Church" rather than in the person of the Holy Spirit exclusively.

Additionally, we are told that only in the Catholic Church can we have the full measure of salvation:

For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.⁶

Allowing for ignorance and/or naivete on the part of those evangelicals who have signed the declaration on Evangelicals and Catholics Together, we must extend grace to them—at least to the point where they become informed of the Catholic Church's agenda of subversion against non-Catholic Christians. Yet it seems impossible that learned men do not know, or are incapable of understanding, that agenda—so much so that they would happily lead their followers into the snare.

UNILATERAL DISARMAMENT

It seems incongruous that, in their plea for unity, the authors of the declaration would cite John Paul II:

As the Second Millennium draws to a close, the Christian mission in world history faces a moment of daunting opportunity and responsibility. If in the merciful and mysterious ways of God the Second Coming is delayed, we enter upon a Third Millennium that could be, in the words of John Paul II, "a springtime of world missions." (p. 1.)

In view of John Paul II's numerous proclamations of war against "fundamentalist Christians" who are leading Catholics into their folds, particularly in Roman Catholic countries, one would think it an embarrassment to link his name to a declaration calling for unity. Let's not forget that the Catholic Church does not function apart from the authority of its head.

A major purpose of Roman Catholic ecumenism is to lull non-Catholic Christians to sleep in order to thwart evangelization of Roman Catholics. In step with that purpose, and in spite of the pope's call for war against fundamentalism, many evangelical leaders today are calling for a "cease fire" against Roman Catholicism, asking their constituents to respect the faith of Roman Catholics. This, in fact, is one provision of this declaration:

The love of Christ compels us and we are therefore resolved to avoid such conflict between our communities and, where such conflict exists, to do what we can to re-

duce and eliminate it. Beyond that, we are called and we are therefore resolved to explore patterns of working and witnessing together in order to advance the one mission of Christ. (p. 4)

The declaration calls for avoidance of conflict, and encourages us to do what we can to reduce and eliminate it. But the only way it can be eliminated is if the Roman Catholic Church rescinds its many unscriptural doctrines that it holds essential to true faith.

For example, what about "sola scriptura"? The Catholic Church asserts that its teaching authority and Tradition are equal to Scripture:

It is clear, therefore, that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others.⁷

What about all the other damnable heresies that characterize Roman Catholic dogma: the "sacrifice" of the mass; transubstantiation; worship of the bread and wine as God; the incomplete atonement of Christ; the sacraments; the claim to exclusive sanction by God as the only true church; baptismal regeneration. These and so many more will never be rescinded by the Vatican. The only avenue toward unity, then, is for evangelicals to overlook these doctrines or accept them as true!

What has passed the notice of those who have bought into the ecumenical movement is that it was spawned in the Vatican for the Vatican's benefit. It doesn't take a genius to recognize this truth in light of the fact that the same Vatican II council that called for ecumenism also reaffirmed its intractable position on all its doctrines.

We hear constantly that the Roman Catholic Church is different; it has changed into a more evangelical and biblically-oriented religion. This is not true. No defined doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church can be changed without first rejecting the doctrine of papal infallibility.

TRUTH OR UNITY?

We are left with a choice: either we can have unity with Rome at the expense of truth, or we can have truth at the expense of unity with Rome. Yet the evangelical ecumenists think otherwise:

We reject any appearance of harmony that is purchased at the price of truth. (p.4)

It would be laughable were it not so threatening to the purity of the faith to read these people's statement that they "reject any appearance of harmony that is purchased at the price of truth." They've already chosen the appearance of harmony at the expense of truth. How can two factions that have two different truths agree that "truth" is paramount?

Leave The Pope's People Alone

Actions still speak louder than words. Yet in this case, the words confirm the actions: there is to be no winning of "converts" from Roman Catholicism:

Today, in this country and elsewhere, Evangelicals and Catholics attempt to win "converts" from one another's folds. In some ways, this is perfectly understandable and perhaps inevitable. In many instances, however, such efforts at recruitment undermine the Christian mission by which we are bound by God's Word and to which we have recommitted ourselves in this statement. It should be clearly understood between Catholics and Evangelicals that Christian witness is of necessity aimed at conversion. Authentic conversion is—in its beginning, in its end, and all along the way—conversion to God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this connection, we embrace as our own the explanation of the Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversation (1988):

Conversion is turning away from all that is opposed to God, contrary to Christ's teaching, and turning to God, to Christ, the Son, through the work of the Holy Spirit. It entails a turning from the

self-centeredness of sin to faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. Conversion is a passing from one way of life to another new one, marked with the newness of Christ. It is a continuing process so that the whole life of a Christian should be a passage from death to life, from error to truth, from sin to grace. Our life in Christ demands continual growth in God's grace. Conversion is personal but not private. Individuals respond in faith to God's call but faith comes from hearing the proclamation of the word of God and is to be expressed in the life together in Christ that is the Church. (pp. 20-21)

Interesting. "Conversion is turning away from all that is opposed to God." How is opposition to God defined? Is it not the teaching of error that exalts itself against His Word? Is it not disobedience to His command to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3)? Is it not persecution against His true disciples? Is it not the idolatry that calls for worship of the Communion wafer with the same worship due God, as affirmed by Vatican II?

There should be no doubt in anyone's mind "that all the faithful ought to show to this most holy sacrament the worship which is due to the true God, as has always been the custom of the Catholic Church. Nor is it to be adored any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten."⁸

We must understand that the purpose of the ecumenical movement—on both sides—is to dialogue with one another until they can reach a consensus on unity, bringing the entire household of God into one fold with one shepherd. Disciples of the Lord believe the one Shepherd is Christ Himself. But Roman Catholics believe the one shepherd is the pope.

The visible manifestation of that unity, many agree, is the sharing of the communion elements together. For this to occur, either all non-Catholics will have to convert to Catholicism and ac-

cept this damnable heresy—this idolatry of worshiping created matter—or the Roman Catholic Church would have to recant this, as well as numerous other sacredly entrenched doctrines. Yet one major tenet of Roman Catholicism is that, once a doctrine is declared "ex cathedra"—by the pope seated on "Peter's Throne"—it can never be recanted. Else the Roman Catholic Church would cease to exist. This, it is obvious, is either a lesson in futility, or a lesson in betrayal by alleged brethren in Christ who think they know better than God's Word.

How can anyone attempt to turn others "from error to truth" when they hold the truth in such low esteem?

In its call against persuading others into a particular fold, the writers of this declaration miss the whole point of proclaiming the Gospel:

It is understandable that Christians who bear witness to the Gospel try to persuade others that their communities and traditions are more fully in accord with the Gospel. There is a necessary distinction between evangelizing and what is today commonly called proselytizing or "sheep stealing." We condemn the practice of recruiting people from another community for purposes of denominational or institutional aggrandizement. At the same time, our commitment to full religious freedom compels us to defend the legal freedom to proselytize even as we call upon Christians to refrain from such activity. (p. 22)

The purpose behind ministering the Gospel to Roman Catholics is not usually for "denominational or institutional aggrandizement." Those few who do evangelize do so to lead souls to Christ, not into a particular church body. Yet conversely, the purpose of Roman Catholic evangelism is to lead as many as possible into the Catholic Church. And this is as it must be for any church that considers itself "the only true church." Otherwise they would be unfaithful.

The reason for this call to refrain from such activity is that the ecumenists see everyone as a brother in Christ who calls himself a Christian. This is borne out in the following statement from their declaration:

As we near the Third Millennium, there are approximately 1.7 billion Christians in the world. About a billion of these are Catholics and more than 300 million are Evangelical Protestants. (p. 2)

Is this naivete or a deliberate overlooking of the fact that the name "Christian" is applied by the Roman Catholic Church to anyone who is baptized? Evangelical Christians should be concerned with the number of true believers, not the number of nominal or baptized "Christians."

THE COMMON GOAL

The reason these people want to convince us that there are so many of us out there is to bolster their agenda of political and social action to clean up the world, as attested by this statement:

Christians individually and the church corporately also have a responsibility for the right ordering of society. We resist the utopian conceit that it is within our powers to build the Kingdom of God on earth. We embrace this task hopefully; knowing that God has called us to love our neighbor, we seek to secure for all a greater measure of civil righteousness and justice, confident that he will crown our efforts when he rightly orders all things in the coming of his Kingdom.

In the exercising of these public responsibilities there has been in recent years a growing convergence and cooperation between Evangelicals and Catholics. We thank God for the discovery of one another in contending for a common cause. Much more important, we thank God for the discovery of one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Our cooperation as citizens is animated by our convergence as Christians. We promise one another that we will work to deepen, build

upon, and expand this pattern of convergence and cooperation. (pp. 12-13)

Believers in Christ do not have "a responsibility for the right ordering of civil society." This was the rationale behind the Holy Roman Empire. And who is "the church?" Do the evangelicals and the Catholics hold the same definition of "the church?" Roman Catholicism teaches that it is the only true church, and that all Christians are members of it, albeit temporarily separated.

The belief that numbers are important to a dominionist agenda is the impetus behind accepting as "Christians" anyone who has been baptized, even if under the threat of death, as has been Roman Catholic policy in the past.

If these people can earnestly contend for political and social action, why can they not earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3)? Should Christians sacrifice the purity of the faith for the sake of political action?

THE WINNER

The only winner here is the Roman Catholic Church, because few Catholics even attempt to lead non-Catholics (or anyone else for that matter) to Christ. And true believers won't be led into Roman Catholicism. What this amounts to is the Roman Catholic Church using evangelical Christians to indirectly proselytize for Roman Catholicism. After all, if Catholicism is a legitimate expression of the Christian faith, why is there a need for the rest of apostate Christianity to remain separated from its apostate mother?

The missionary purpose of Roman Catholicism is to enhance itself—to lead the "separated brethren" back into the flock of the "only true church." Were its signers merely renegade Roman Catholics ignorant of the Roman Catholic agenda, we might chalk it all up to ignorance. But these are Roman bishops and priests who understand fully the designs of Roman Catholic ecumenism. It is dishonest for them to decry recruiting "for purposes of denominational or institutional aggrandizement."

The fact is that there are far more people leaving the Roman Catholic Church than there are non-Catholics converting to Catholicism. This has alarmed the Vatican for decades and is the reason for the "conciliatory" stance of Vatican II. Were the shoe on the other foot you can be sure there would be no call for ecumenical "unity." The more power Rome has, the more aggressive she gets.

The evangelical sychophants for the Vatican are selling out the true brethren in Christ by persuading them that it is "unloving" to confront Roman Catholic error:

Christian witness must always be made in a spirit of love and humility. It must not deny but must readily accord to everyone the full freedom to discern and decide what is God's will for his life. Witness that is in service to the truth is in service to such freedom. Any form of coercion—physical, psychological, legal, economic—corrupts Christian witness and is to be unqualifiedly rejected. Similarly, bearing false witness against other persons and communities, or casting unjust and uncharitable suspicions upon them, is incompatible with the Gospel. (p. 23)

True "witness that is in service to the truth" is first and foremost in service to the absolute authority of God's Word. Any institution that does not recognize God's Word as its ultimate authority apart from its own Tradition and teaching authority cannot possibly act as a "witness that is in service to the truth." Nor can its priestly agents. Nor can those who embrace those priestly agents while calling for others not to challenge Rome's unscriptural teachings.

This is something that had to be birthed in North America where Christians are generally ignorant of the Catholic Church's continued persecution of true believers in South America and other countries heavily influenced by the Vatican. The use of "coercion—physical, psychological, legal, economic"

—is still very much a part of Roman Catholic practice in those countries. Must we ignore the sufferings of our brethren under the heel of the Vatican for the sake of some contrived unity here in America simply because Rome's double agents say we must?

EARNESTLY CONTEND NO MORE

Not only do the ecumenists tell us we are not to attempt to lead Catholics into the truth and away from the errors of their church, we are to present to new converts conflicting views of certain doctrines so they can choose for themselves what to believe!

For Catholics, all who are validly baptized are born again and are truly, however imperfectly, in communion with Christ. That baptismal grace is to be continually reawakened and revived through conversion. For most Evangelicals, but not all, the experience of conversion is to be followed by baptism as a sign of the new birth. For Catholics, all baptized are already members of the church, however dormant their faith and life; for many Evangelicals, the new birth requires baptismal initiation into the community of the born again. These differing beliefs about the relationship between baptism, new birth, and membership in the church should be honestly presented to the Christian who has undergone conversion. But again, his decision regarding communal allegiance and participation must be assiduously respected. (p.24, emphasis ours)

What? We give them an option? We can't lead someone to Christ without offering the Catholic Church's doctrine on baptism? Are we to be agents for the Catholic Church at the expense of truth?

So if a non-believer is converted to Christ we are to present the Roman Catholic view of baptism as well as the biblical view. If he chooses to believe that merely being baptized into Roman Catholicism will save him, we are not to dissuade him. If a Roman Catholic is converted to Christ through the proclaiming of the true Gospel, we are

instructed here not to interfere with his church's authority over him—not to dissuade him from the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, he can point to his having been baptized as an infant as reason not to be baptized into Christ with knowledge.

This isn't a small matter; it's a matter of dogma—an essential belief. The issue of baptism is central to Roman Catholic life. It is a "sacrament" that places a person into the Catholic fold and, thus, into Christ.

Where will it end? If this rule of presenting both views applies to baptism, why should it not apply to all doctrines? This is the only logical conclusion to such a proposal.

In other words, doctrine doesn't really matter—at least as far as these evangelical leaders are concerned. In truth, the Roman Catholic Church has more integrity than the evangelical ecumenists. The Roman agents may be bound to damnable heresies, but they believe in what they are doing and they will not concede on their doctrines. Any perceived concessions are meant to eventually lead everyone back under their authority and into submission to their doctrine. At worst, they are playing "two steps forward; one step back."

But what will this mean for those of us who refuse to surrender to this ecumenical agenda? Especially, what will it mean to ex-Roman Catholics who cannot, under any circumstances other than surrender to the pope's authority, be saved? If ex-Catholics refuse to go back to Rome, will the evangelical ecumenists put pressure on the Vatican to acknowledge that ex-Catholics can be saved? Or will they put pressure on us to acquiesce in the interest of unity? Or will they, too, declare us anathema?

There is really no way out for the evangelical ecumenists. Either they can have unity with Roman Catholics under the Roman Catholic Church's terms, or they can have unity with ex-Catholic Christians as fellow believers in Christ. But they cannot have both unless they surrender their consciences and deny all that they know to be truth.

This is not to say that believers cannot have fellowship with individual Catholics who do not know or understand the full implication of Roman dogma. But our fellowship must be based on truth with no apologies. And it must be distinct from ecumenism as propagated by Rome and other religious establishments.

There is yet another reason to reject any attempts at ecumenism with Roman Catholicism: at best, it will result in a watered down faith. If the essential issues of doctrine cannot be held inviolable by evangelicals, yet can be so held by the Roman Catholic Church, the best the evangelical community can hope for is the eventual surrender on these issues.

The Roman Catholic Church is in no hurry; it's counter-reformation agenda is right on track.

LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR

Christians today have largely accepted the idea that only certain "essential" doctrines are important. The rest of Scripture doesn't really matter, regardless of the sacredness to God that it enjoys. What is really being proposed—if we look closely at this scheme—is the diluting of God's Word to the point where it will be taught to the lowest common denominator, not unlike what is occurring in America's education system.

The preaching in most of America's churches is generally non-challenging, focusing on messages that seldom go beyond the basics. The call for ecumenical unity—ignoring the whole counsel of God which we are commanded to obey—is the logical outgrowth of having grown worldly and complacent with mediocrity.

CONCLUSION

It won't be long before total acquiescence is achieved. Why? Because only the Roman Catholic Church will have held to its position. The evangelical community will have considered insistence upon biblical truth as the criterion for fellowship a hindrance to unity.

It's bad enough that so many leaders within Christianity are willing to give the papacy the right hand of fellowship. What looms on the horizon is unity with other religions, particularly Islam.

Islam represents the largest anti-Christ threat to the security of Christians. As Islam's influence inexplicably grows and gradually overtakes Europe it will become the leading religious element within the revived Roman Empire. Eventually, as Roman Catholicism becomes more and more recognized as the primary and authoritative Christian religion, these two entities will join to form the religio-political empire of the final man of sin.

There is good reason to believe that anti-Christ will be a Muslim who is able, for a time, to stem the tide of Islamic terrorism, thus gaining the support and admiration of the world. Should he join, also for a time, with the Vatican state, he will hold power over Western Europe and the Middle East which, together, formed the ancient Roman Empire.

This revived Roman Empire will, with supernatural power, deceive the nations of the world. There is every good reason also, to believe that this Muslim (anti-Christ) will be heralded by the then pope (the false prophet) as the answer to all the world's problems. Who better to be endowed with satanic power to perform signs and wonders to awe the unsuspecting masses and lead them to worship the image of the beast?

The political arena is already desperate for a leader who can staunch the tide of terrorism and warfare. It is only a matter of time before we are presented with what seems the obvious and only choice to achieve that goal.

Only the true faithful in Christ will be prepared to resist that deception, and we are being gradually weaned from dependence upon God's Word as the only source of spiritual truth. Thanks to traitors within the Faith who are fast turning the heads of Christians toward unity with the Vatican (and, eventually, with other religions) we can expect that it will not be long before that goal is achieved as well.

The religious arena is primed for the great deception that will result in persecution of the faithful. God help us once the beast really gets its fangs into the political arena. ✓

SIGNATORIES

In addition to Chuck Colson, Kent Hill, Avery Dulles and John Neuhaus, the following have been involved in the project since the beginning and are signatories of the document:

- Dr. Richard Land, Southern Baptist Convention;
- Dr. Larry Lewis, Southern Baptist Convention;
- Dr. Jesse Miranda, Assemblies of God;
- Brian O'Connell, World Evangelical Fellowship;
- Herbert Schlossberg, Fieldstead Foundation;
- George Weigel, Ethics & Public Policy Center;
- John White, National Association of Evangelicals & Geneva College.
- Monsignor William Murphy, Chancellor, the Archdiocese of Boston;
- Archbishop Francis Stafford, Denver, Colorado.

ENDORSERS

The following had endorsed the document at the time of this writing:

- Bill Bright, Campus Crusade for Christ;
- Dr. James J.I. Packer, Regent College, British Columbia;
- Pat Robertson, President of CBN;
- William Abraham, Perkins School of Theology;
- Elizabeth Achtemeier, Union Theological Seminary;
- William Bently Ball, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania;
- Bishop William Frye, Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry;
- Prof. Mary Ann Glendon, Harvard Law School;
- Os Guinness, Trinity Forum;
- Dr. Mark Noll, Wheaton College;
- Michael Novak, American Enterprise Institute;

- Dr. Thomas Oden, Drew University;
- Dr. John Rodgers, Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry;
- Prof. Robert Destro, Catholic University of America;
- Augustine DiNoia, Dominican House of Studies;
- Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, Fordham University;
- Dean Nathan Hatch, University of Notre Dame;
- Dr. James Hitchcock, St. Louis University;
- Prof. Peter Kreeft, Boston College;
- Matthew Lamb, Boston College;
- Ralph Martin, Renewal Ministries;
- Dr. Thomas Oden, Drew University;
- Bishop Carlos A. Sevilla, Archdiocese of San Francisco.

Since this writing, numerous others are expected to have endorsed this accord.

NOTES

1. Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Austin Flannery, O.P., ed. Ad Gentes Divinitus, 7 December, 1965, Section 7 (New York: Costello Publishing Co., 1977), p. 821.
2. Ibid., "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," Lumen Gentium, 21 November, 1964, Chapter I - "The Mystery of the Church," Section 8, p. 357.
3. Ibid., "Decree on Ecumenism," Vatican II Unitatis Redintegratio, 21 November, 1964, Chapter II - "The Practice of Ecumenism," 24, p. 470.
4. Ibid., Chapter I - "Catholic Principles on Ecumenism," Section 4 - p. 457.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., Section 3 - p. 456.
7. Ibid., "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," Dei Verbum, 18 November, 1965, Chapter II - "The Transmission of Divine Revelation," Section 10, p. 756.
8. Ibid., "Sacred Liturgy," Chapter 9, "Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery," - S.C.R., Eucharisticum Mysterium, 25 May, 1967, - 3, f, p. 104.

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