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FATH  **ON THE LINE**
DARE TO STAND

Doctrine Dilemma

by Tabea Penner and Wendy Goubelj

On January 21, 2014, Bishop Tony Palmer, Pope Francis' right hand man in bringing Protestants and Catholics together, made a significant speech at the annual Kenneth Copeland Ministries Ministers' Conference followed by another equally important video speech posted on March 3, whereby he clarified the new ground rules for unity between Catholics and Protestants.

One such ground rule, given through the analogy of Joseph's brothers coming to Joseph for bread during the famine, was that "the bread is secondary to brotherhood." In the Bible, bread has always symbolized God's Word and Jesus, the Word. Palmer's blasphemous statement suggests that the Word of God, and thereby Jesus, the Bread of Life, is secondary to the unity of mankind. To agree with such a statement is to denounce the Word of God as supreme and to lower Jesus Christ to a position below that of man. Unity must never be more paramount than the Word of God and He who is that very Word – the Bread of Life. (John 1:1,3; 6:32,33, 35)

The next ground rule for unity according to Bishop Palmer is the denigration of doctrine. He said, "It's the glory that glues us together, not the doctrine... God will sort out all our doctrines when we get upstairs."

“ We live in a world of tolerance with thousands of varying versions of truth ”

This question of the importance of doctrines might get some people hung up. From the Bible we know that God never forces anyone to believe what He says. And the Bible teaches that we must extend kindness to everyone regardless of whether they agree with us or not. In fact, we are admonished to live peaceably with all men wherever possible. (See Hebrews 12:14). But sometimes we may hide behind the gracious freedom God gives to everyone in order to avoid standing for truth and challenging others' viewpoints with God's clear Word.

In our secular world it isn't always easy to differ about truth. Others have different viewpoints and we must respect that. We work in secular environments with people that have diverse worldviews and we get along with them. Society teaches us to keep our differences to ourselves and be tolerant of others' points of view.

As a result, it's very easy to believe that differences in doctrine don't matter. But what we choose to believe when it comes to spiritual matters is of great consequence to our eternal des-

Our aim is to urge men and women to stand for truth and resist error. We pray that in times of serious compromise our ministry will equip you with solid information on current end-time issues and trends, and encourage you to live a life apart from worldly influences.

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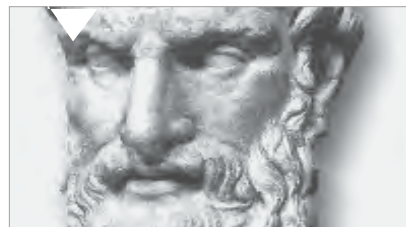


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Have you ever considered what it might have been like to have gone along with Jonah on his journey? Maybe you have already taken a journey with him, rather unknowingly...

Jonah Journeys

Patsy Gabbert

Contemplate a story with me, if you will. God came to a man named Jonah and presented a word picture to him. The situation was given in basic reality - a city was being consumed by its wickedness. God's heart of love yearned for these people. They were breaking His laws and cutting themselves off from connection with Him, yet He saw some who wanted to turn to Him in humility and repentance. So He asked Jonah to warn them of the consequences of evil and violence. Jonah was aware that this wicked city would not think much of his intervention in their affairs. He decided to try and ignore God's word to him and took an escape route more suited to his own interests.

Have you ever considered what it might have been like to have gone along with Jonah on his journey? Maybe you have already taken a journey with him, rather unknowingly. Let's examine the story of Jonah. You may recognize way-marks in his story that you yourself have passed along in the journey of your own life.

But before we go, let us try to discover what Jonah was fleeing from, especially in his thoughts. Jonah 1:2 explains that Jonah was trying to get away from "the presence of the Lord." Where is the presence of the Lord? *Ministry of Healing* page 492 has a thought that is well worth meditating on.

*"...by beholding Jesus, talking of His love and perfection of character, we become changed into His image. By contemplating the lofty ideal He has placed before us, we shall be uplifted into a pure and holy atmosphere, even the **presence of God.**"*
(Emphasis added).

Fleeing into a Tempest

Seeking release from God's assignment, Jonah tried his own direction. This part of the journey may have begun as a pleasant experience, except for Jonah's state of mind, but soon, and rather abruptly, it became a "mighty tempest" (Jonah 1:4). So mighty a tempest, in fact, that "the ship was like to be broken." And where was Jonah at that moment? He was very soundly sleeping (vs.5). Have you experienced the total exhaustion that running from God brings?

Have others
affected by your
attempted es-
cape from God
had to remind
you to call on
His name?

In the midst of a storm Jonah was completely unaware of it! Those around him had to wake him up! They even had to explain why they woke him up and then encouraged him to call his God, (Jonah 1:6) saying, "...if so be that God will think on us, that we perish not." Is it possible that we could put others in danger with us when we flee from the presence of the Lord? Have you ever experienced something similar? Have others affected

by your attempted escape from God had to remind you to call on His name?

By Beholding We Are Changed

Why did Jonah try to leave the ministry that God called him to? Was the job just too big, too threatening to his own life, too humiliating, perhaps too frustrating? Could it be that Jonah began to think and even talk about all the evil things he had heard about the city where he was sent to? After all, God talked to him about the wickedness of the people there (Jonah 1:2). In other words, did Jonah begin to build a "case" in his mind and heart against the Ninevites? Possibly you have heard or read this quote from *Ministry of Healing*, page 492: "The very act of looking for evil in others develops evil in those who look. By dwelling upon the faults of others, we are changed into the same image."

Notice what happened next. In chapter 2 we find that Jonah was cast into the deep, into the heart of the seas, with the floods surrounding him, the waves and billows passing over him. Suddenly, swallowed whole, he began to think that he was actually cast out of God's sight, with the waters and the deep closed in over him, and digestive enzymes at work on his own skin. He was aware of the weeds which wrapped about his head and he believed he

was at the foundations or the bottoms of the mountains (Jonah 2:3-6).

Here's a question to ponder. Are the "bottoms of the mountains" when "the waters compassed me about" somewhere near the "depths of the sea"? In Micah 7:18-19, God gives us some extremely important information which impacts every interaction we have with others. In the first part of the verse, God assures us that He "will have compassion on us; He will subdue **our** iniquities" but what does it say He will do with the sins of others? "...[A]nd Thou wilt cast all **their** sins into the depths of the sea." Was God willing to cast the sins of the Ninevites into the depths? Apparently, Jonah got a very close inspection of the very area where God wanted to cast their sins! Notice that the Lord prepared a special transport for him to take this out-of-the-way tour. I believe this was just to give Jonah, and us, a very clear picture of what thinking about the less-than-upright behavior of others will do to us. We are told in 1 Corinthians 13:5 that love thinks "no evil." Why? These fault-finding thoughts distract our focus from Jesus and His desire, ability, and power to save. (See SC pages 71-72).

Remember that the weeds wrapped around Jonah's head in Jonah 2:5. In verse 7, we read "my soul fainted within me." Have you experienced a "mighty tempest" in your own mind when you have thought on the faults of others? Have you ever journeyed into discouragement or depression because someone would not or could not agree with you on something, or see things your way? Could your own "ship" be in danger of being "broken" by these types of tempests in your mind?

Jonah's New Perspective

It was then, while he was in the belly of the fish that Jonah began to consider some new perspectives. He chose to look away from the faults of others toward God's "holy temple" (Jonah 2:4). He "remembered the Lord" and declared, "my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple." Verses 8 and 9 provide insights into Jonah's new thoughts. He concluded, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy" (Jonah 2:8). Jonah quickly decided that his best course of thought was to "sacrifice to [God] with the voice of thanksgiving." In fact he proclaimed, "Salvation is of the Lord." Jonah no longer needed to examine the hearts of others.

What does it mean to "observe lying vanities"? Vanities can denote something transitory, unsatisfactory, empty. The root word from which vanities comes is

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"to be vain in act, word, or expectation" or "to lead astray."¹ Vanity could be in my own character and life, yet it seems easier to notice it in others. Thus we think it necessary to build a case, or hold a grudge, often against someone we care a lot about. Yet when Jonah saw where this kind of thinking took him, he decided it would be much better for him to just be thankful and leave the rest to the Lord. After all, "salvation is of the Lord."

Rather than dwelling on the faults of others, we must praise God for His ability to turn them from their iniquities.

There is at least one more lesson to consider from this part of Jonah's journey. For what do we praise God when we are so aware of faults in others? Look at Acts 3:26: "Unto you first, God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Yes! We may praise God that He can, He will, and He is giving that person every opportunity to turn away from iniquity! He is inviting

that person and us to turn away from iniquity! Rather than dwelling on the faults of others, we must praise God for His ability to turn them from their iniquities. We must choose to think God's redemptive thoughts about others.

Judging the Judge

But the lessons of Jonah do not end there. When he went to Nineveh, delivered God's message and saw the people respond, he still thought that he knew what God should do next. Instead of just noticing what others were doing wrong, he began to think that God also was not responding as He should! Remember in verse 8 he had recognized that to observe lying vanities caused the forsaking of his own mercy. Disappointed with God's display of mercy for the Ninevites, rather than plead for mercy for himself, he asked instead for death (Jonah

4:3). Moses and Paul asked for death for themselves if their death would give others opportunity for life. (See Exodus 32:32, Romans 9:3). Here Jonah asked for death because God was gracious and merciful to give life to repenting people. Two times God asked Jonah, "Dost thou well to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4,9) Jonah hung onto his resistance to the end of the story. And he said, "I do well to be angry, even unto death" (Jonah 4:9). While Jonah held onto his resistance and judgment of God's character and ways, God patiently explained His desire and His decision to spare people and "much cattle" in accordance with His true character of mercy and power to save (Jonah 4:11).

We face the same choice. Do we want or need to go to the depths because we persist in examining the faults of others, and hold those faults in our memory banks just in case we need them to justify our own actions? Lessons from Jonah's experience should teach us to avoid harboring these "weeds" in our thoughts. We can learn instead to praise and thank God that He is at work in our hearts and in the hearts of those around us. Praising God and deciding not to dwell on the faults of others may even prevent us from being vomited out, as God attempts to interrupt our tour into the deep dark behaviors of others. (See Jonah 2:10.) We may be free from the depressive effects of storing these negative, judgmental thoughts in the depths of our mind. How? By God's grace at work in our hearts, we learn to, and choose to, leave the faults of others in God's place for them – in the depths of the sea. ■

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¹ James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996). Hebrew dictionary page 33, #'s 1892,1891.

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tiny and shapes how we live and relate to others here on earth. Palmer's contention about doctrinal differences being irrelevant to unity is an issue of truth versus error. As we near the close of time, the battle between truth and error will become more intense, and those that believe error will be more easily deceived.

“Truth is to be sought...not defined and created...”

But truth remains truth, regardless of who believes it or not. Truth is to be sought by the individual, not defined and created by each individual for himself. Truth transcends our existence. Oddly enough, this understanding of truth is not commonplace.

Jesus tells us that He is truth:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life...” John 14:6

And He also reminds us that the Holy Spirit's job is to lead us into “all truth”. (See John 16:13). If there is only one Spirit (Ephesians 2:18; 4:4), then surely the Spirit will lead into one truth, and not into thousands of different versions.

The word “doctrine” simply means “teaching”. And the Bible admonishes us to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21) implying that there can be a truthful doctrine. Revelation 2:15 even shows us that there are hateful doctrines to Christ – the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, for example. Doctrines therefore do matter, for if we profess to follow Christ, we must also follow the doctrines (or teachings) Christ loves and reject those He hates. The Bible also speaks of something called “sound doctrine” – doctrine that is sound, sensible, truthful – and warns us that there will come a time when people will not want sound doctrine but will prefer whatever pleases their fancies. (2 Timothy 4:3,4).

Consider the story of the Good Samaritan. After finding the poor man beaten and dying on the side of the road, the Good Samaritan poured oil and wine on his wounds. The beaten, dying man represents you and me, and the Good Samaritan represents Jesus Christ, hated by the world, who came to find us on the side of the road and restore us to life. We know from the symbolism found in the Bible that oil represents the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:2-6; Revelation 4:5) and wine represents doctrine (Luke 5:37). The wine of Babylon represents false doctrine, but the wine poured out by the Good Samaritan is the true doctrine found in the Word of God, for it offered healing to the dying man.

Now why did the Good Samaritan give the dying man wine – doctrine – along with the Holy Spirit? Why not just the oil of the Holy Spirit? Tony Palmer spoke of being united by the “glory,” referring to the charisma of the Spirit, and implied that since charismatic Catholics and Evangelicals all experience that same “glory” they are one in the Spirit.

But the story of the Good Samaritan shows that we need not only the oil of the Spirit but the wine of true doctrine. So having true doctrine and being filled with the Holy Spirit are inextricably linked. You cannot have one without the other. In fact, Jesus

connected the coming of the Holy Spirit with obedience to the truth when He promised to send the Holy Spirit to those who love and obey Him:

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth” (John 14: 15-17).

Obviously, doctrine based on truth is important to Christ. Without it, people can be deceived and be filled with another spirit, instead of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit points us to truth (John 16:13).

Doctrine also distinguishes us from other groups. The Bible says “come out and be separate.” And it is our doctrines and the practical living out of those truths that set us apart from other religious groups and the rest of the world. Sound doctrine helps us know right from wrong and thus be saved from deception. Ellen White, in *Lift Him Up*, page 116, states,

“‘Sound doctrine’ is Bible truth--truth that will promote piety and devotion, confirming God’s people in the faith...”

“The doctrines of Christ are intended to make a heart change within us.”

The above quote reminds us that doctrines are not there to just give us head knowledge. We are not saved by knowing all the right truths. The doctrines of Christ are intended to make a heart change within us. In fact, the true doctrines of God are sometimes hard to receive because they require a heart change. Many false doctrines require nothing at all, which makes it much easier to think of them as something that can wait to be “sorted out upstairs”.

In John 7:16,17, Jesus says that true doctrine comes from God the Father:

“My doctrine [teaching] is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

“The perception and appreciation of truth, He [Jesus] said, depends less upon the mind than upon the heart. Truth must be received into the soul; it claims the homage of the will. If truth could be submitted to the reason alone, pride would be no hindrance in the way of its reception. But it is to be received through the work of grace in the heart; and its reception depends upon the renunciation of every sin that the Spirit of God reveals. Man’s advantages for obtaining a knowledge of the truth, however great these may be, will prove of no benefit to him unless the heart is open to receive the truth, and there is a conscientious surrender of every habit and practice that is opposed to its principles. To those who thus yield themselves to God, having an honest desire to know and to do His will, the truth is revealed as the power of God for their salvation. These will be able to distinguish between him who speaks for God, and him who speaks merely from himself.” (DA 455, 456).

Genetically Modified Organisms

by Phillip Sizemore



Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO's) have become a hot topic for many people seeking to eat right and live a healthy life. There is a lot of information coming to light and many warnings about the dangers of modifying the genetics of our food supply. Personally, as I try to keep up with all the new health information and try to eat what is good and stay away from what is not, it seems like we will soon come to the place where we will have to quit eating in order to survive. I have actually had someone see me eating corn chips in my haystack (taco salad) at potluck and give me a short lecture on how dangerous my meal was because GMO corn was used to make the corn chips. I fondly remember the good old days when you were only a heretic for eating pork.

I agree that our bodies belong to God and we should do all we can to live as healthy as we can (see 1 Corinthians 10:31), but in the end we are still terminal. Our only hope is the coming of Jesus to take us out of this world. The use of GMO's in our food supply is just another sign that this world cannot continue as it is. What bothers me most about GMO's is that if they did not tell us they were modifying the food then we would never know. After all, doesn't corn still look like corn? What makes the changes all the more dangerous is that

the food still looks the same. I mean, if they were to inject a pig gene into corn for some reason and it grew and looked like a pork chop then we would know to stay away from it, but it still looks like corn!

However, the GMO's that I am most worried about have nothing to do with our physical food. There are GMO's that are even more dangerous than those affecting our food supply. Jesus gave a parable in Luke 8 about the sower sowing his seed on different types of ground. In verse eleven He says, "The seed is the word of God." It is the modification of *this* seed that really concerns me, because the modification of this seed is destroying many for eternity. In the same way that the corn still looks like corn even after being modified, the seeds of God's Word, though modified, still look the same!

The Bible warns us that in the last days we will be living in perilous times. (See 2 Timothy 3:1). As we read the Bible we could say, "Of course!" After all, it seems obvious to most of us that the closer we come to the end of time, the worse things are going to get. In 2 Timothy 3:2-4, Paul lists a lot of problems that he no doubt saw happening in his own day.

*2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,
3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,
4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

The GMO's that I am most worried about have nothing to do with our physical food.

However verses 4 and 5 should cause us to pause. Verse 4 says men will be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” In other words they will claim to love God, but love the pleasures of this world more. Then in verse 5, Paul makes a powerful prediction about what Christians will

be like in the last days: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” In other words, there will be people who are looking, acting, and talking like Christians, but they will be lacking the power that mark the Christ’s true followers.

It’s important for us not to modify the seeds of truth to suit our fancy, only to discover later that we are lost.

Paul seems to be telling us the same thing Jesus warned about in Matthew 7:21-23. Jesus says there will be people who will call Him “Lord” but He will reply, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” These folks will also have a form of godliness. After all, they will do great works and claim Jesus is Lord. But Jesus will reject them. We see that there will be people who are deceived into thinking all is well, but will find out only too late that they are lost. This sounds a little scary. Imagine eating what you thought was healthy food, only to find out that you are now dying at an early age because the so-called healthy food you have been eating was in fact genetically modified. As a result, you are doomed.

The Word of God tells us that the devil works by deception. (See Revelation 12:9). He knows that most of us will not worship him as Satan, so he has to find a way to deceive us. Of course, the essence of deception is that you don’t know you are being deceived. So Satan works by modifying the seeds of God’s Word and many are eating it up! How can this be? The Word of God which never fails, predicted it would happen. It’s important for us not to modify the seeds of truth to suit our fancy, only to discover later that we are lost.

Look at these warnings God gave us against making modifications to His Word:

• Deuteronomy 4:2:

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

• Deuteronomy 12:32:

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

• Proverbs 30:5-6:

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

• Revelation 22:18-19

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

This world is corrupt and dying as a result of someone trying to modify the Word of God.

This world is corrupt and dying as a result of someone trying to modify the Word of God. God had warned Adam and Eve against eating from the tree in the middle of the garden, saying, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” The serpent modified God’s word by adding one word to what God had said: “Ye shall not surely die.” Here is the problem we have faced since our first parents were in the Garden of Eden and it will continue to be the issue that separates God’s people from Satan’s until the end of time. Those who choose to follow what the word of God says with no modifications will be taking the safe yet controversial course.

Today as Christians debate issues like creation and women’s ordination we find people trying to change or ignore what the Word of God says in order to be politically correct and convenient. But Romans 3:4 warns against that course in these words, “...let God be true, but every man a liar....” God’s warnings against modifying His Seed (Word) must be heeded. Whether we accept His Word and obey, or modify His word and disobey, will determine our ultimate destiny. It is a life and death issue. ■

God, Strike Me Dead

by Greg Koukl

Has an atheist friend ever used this argument on you?

Some people use this as proof that God doesn't exist: They say, "God strike me dead in five minutes." Five minutes pass and God doesn't strike them dead. This is so silly to me that it hardly even deserves a response. But I will give one to show how silly it is. Let's say your atheist friend is Fred. You say, "Fred, unless you give me a thousand dollars in the next five minutes, I do not believe you exist." Now, am I justified in rejecting the existence of Fred because Fred doesn't do what I tell him to do? Doesn't that strike you as a rather stupid way of arguing against God's existence?

The question really is, is it a good reason not to believe in someone because they won't do what you tell them to do? In this case, is it a good reason not to believe in the Creator of the universe because He won't jump at your command?

Think about it for a moment. I can't believe in the President of the United States. Why not? Because I told him to come to dinner and he didn't come. I can't believe in a President that won't come to dinner when I tell him to. Do you see how silly that is?

These kinds of questions give a bad name to atheists. There are atheists who are careful and who would never be caught dead making this kind of statement. When you hear an atheist saying something like this, you know that he's silly and small-minded. He doesn't care about being careful about his point of view and he is just saying silly things. He doesn't even take his own atheism seriously. If he did, he'd be a lot more careful than to say a stupid thing like that. Because, obviously, the existence of any conscious being is not contingent upon their obedience to my frivolous commands. ■



Greg Koukl received his Masters in Philosophy of Religion and Ethics at Talbot School of Theology, and his Masters in Christian Apologetics from Simon Greenleaf University. He is an adjunct professor in Christian apologetics at Biola University. He's hosted his own radio talk show for over 20 years advocating clear-thinking Christianity and defending the Christian world view.

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We know that throughout all the ages, even as far back as Cain and Abel, the trend has always been that the remnant, Christ's followers, were always in the minority because, "... men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). The remnant at the end of time will be the same. It will not be a mega Christian movement, but a minority group. (See Matthew 7: 13, 14).

The Bible tells us that this entire global connection or ecumenical movement between all the churches is a sign of the end. (See Revelation 13). Ellen White elaborates on it here:

"When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near" (5T 451.1).

“Pope Francis’ and Tony Palmer’s call to unity is not a positive, Biblical movement that we must join.”

Pope Francis’ and Tony Palmer’s call to unity is not a positive, Biblical movement that we must join.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:24 that the very elect might be deceived to believe the false christs. If this is so then how can we prepare ourselves to not be deceived? Ellen White puts it very plainly. She says,

*"Rebellion and apostasy are in the very air we breathe. We shall be affected by it unless we by faith hang our helpless souls upon Christ. If men are so easily misled, how will they stand when Satan shall personate Christ, and work miracles? Who will be unmoved by his misrepresentations, professing to be Christ when it is only Satan assuming the person of Christ, and apparently working the works of Christ? What will hold God's people from giving their allegiance to false christs? "Go ye not ... after them" (Luke 21:8). **The doctrines must be plainly understood.**" (Letter 1, 1897 emphasis added).*

If we know our doctrines well and are anchored to them, then no matter what comes, we will not be moved. Whatever false doctrine comes along, if we diligently search to Scriptures to follow Christ's doctrines we will not be deceived. Let us always remember these words of counsel, "Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support" (*Before the Dawn*, page 38).

We are going to have to stand for what we believe as individuals, not as a group. This means that we must know our doctrines individually. If we're not grounded in the Bible, then someone wiser and stronger will tear us down.

"We must individually know for ourselves what is truth, and be prepared to give a reason of the hope that we have with meekness

and fear, not in a proud, boasting, self-sufficiency, but with the spirit of Christ. We are nearing the time when we shall stand individually alone to answer for our belief. Religious errors are multiplying and entwining themselves with Satanic power about the people. There is scarcely a doctrine of the Bible that has not been denied" (Letter 6, 1886. {Ev 69.2}).

Another powerful and eye opening statement from *The Review and Herald*, November 19, 1908 is this:

"Satan is now more earnestly engaged in playing the game of life for souls than at any previous time; and unless we are constantly on our guard, he will establish in our hearts, pride, love of self, love of the world, and many other evil traits. He will also use every possible device to unsettle our faith in God and in the truths of His Word. If we have not a deep experience in the things of God, if we have not a thorough knowledge of His Word, we shall be beguiled to our ruin by the errors and sophistries of the enemy. False doctrines will sap the foundations of many, because they have not learned to discern truth from error. Our only safeguard against the wiles of Satan is to study the Scriptures diligently, to have an intelligent understanding of the reasons of our faith, and faithfully to perform every known duty. The indulgence of one known sin will cause weakness and darkness, and subject us to fierce temptation."

We must immerse ourselves in the Scriptures, pay close attention to doctrines and align our lives with the truth. This is not a time for us to carelessly throw our doctrine aside in an attempt to make friends with others. Such a rash act would be akin to a soldier fighting a front line battle with no armor or hope of protection. Let us not throw our armor down and walk the battle lines unprepared. This would dishonor our Commander and Chief by telling Him that we are strong enough to withstand the enemy without His help. The time will come where we must stand for the truth that we know and believe, individually. Let us use this time to get acquainted with our Bible truths and learn to love them deeply. Let us arm ourselves well for the battle and let us come together as the Bible believing army of the Lord.

"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). ■

Wendy & Abea

“Peace if possible, Truth at all cost.”

~ Martin Luther



by Walter J. Veith

Editor's Note:

UNITY AT *ALL* COST?

The message of Pope Francis and the overwhelming response of Evangelical Christians on Jan/Feb 2014 came as a shock to many. But it shouldn't have been. The ecumenical ties between Protestantism and Rome have been building for decades. Adventists should not be surprised by these developments. In this article, we outline the path that has set the stage for the current climate.

We are living in a time of unprecedented drive toward unity and conformity of religious thought. The drive towards unity (or ecumenism) has been increasing throughout the 20th century.

Through the charismatic movement and the efforts of the Vatican, Protestant denominations are putting aside their differences and focusing on common points rather than points of doctrine. It is argued that all people serve the same God, and tolerance for different viewpoints is an essential ingredient for peace.

As a result, ecumenism is the new order of the day. The World Council of Churches defines ecumenism this way:

The word oikoumene, from which the term “ecumenical” derives, means “the whole inhabited earth”...In modern usage, the word embraces the unity of God’s whole creation and recognizes every human pursuit as subject to the healing ministry of Christ’s Spirit.ⁱ

It is acknowledged that people have a spiritual dimension, but all religions, regardless of what they believe, are seen as one—a kind of smorgasbord of spiritual choices to fill the spiritual needs of the individual.

However, there is naturally friction as each major religion sees things differently. For example, Jesus is God in the Christian religion, while in Islam and Buddhism Jesus is only a good man or prophet. Judaism rejects Jesus’ claims to be the Messiah, and New Age doctrine says He is here on the earth now, and has made multiple appearances throughout history.

Christians also hold to doctrinal differences based on their denominations. However, the differences between denominations are played down, and only the common points are discussed. The question, “Why are there so many denominations?” seems to imply that there is no need for denominations at all—that we are all just one big Christian family.

It is true that those that believe in Christ, regardless of denomination, are children of the same Father, and brothers and sisters in Christ. And it is true that differences in doctrine cannot and should not prevent Christians from praying together, helping each other, and loving each other. But it is also true that the Word is to be the guide for all Christians.

Any differences in doctrine must be brought to the Word of God for examination with an open mind, so that the Word and the Word alone will dictate our doctrinal beliefs. This is the unity Christ wanted for His followers. Never did He mean that we could believe whatever we wanted about a particular doctrine, for Christ Himself quoted the Word and lived by it.

The confusion among Christian denominations explains why atheists and agnostics see religion, and especially Christianity, as a spiritual crutch. It seems that each person interprets the Word to suit his or her fancy, and that truth is unavailable, unattainable, and perhaps even non-existent. Truth becomes relative to each person’s perspective and experiences.

TWO KINDS OF UNITY

The ecumenical unity sought by most religious and political leaders today can only be achieved at the expense of God’s truth and only through compromise. Unity at all cost is the driving force of their religious endeavors. This false unity is not based on God’s Word, but on dogma and experience:

Dogmatic unity is the binding of people together through principles and doctrine. Dogmas can include words of the church fathers, sacraments, and liturgies.

Experiential unity is found when emotions or supernatural happenings become the unifying factor. This type of unity can cross Biblical, doctrinal, and cultural barriers, bringing people together in a communal emotional high.

The apostle Paul warns us that a false spirit and false Jesus will come:

*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth **another Jesus**, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive **another spirit**, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him (2 Corinthians 11:2-4, emphasis added).*

Paul speaks about another Jesus that could be offered—different from the One in the Bible that walked this earth 2000 years ago. We can indeed see this verse coming true around us. A “universal Christ” is needed in order for the current drive towards religious unity to succeed. How else can Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Christians unite?

As a result of the false Christ, there is a massive attack on the true Jesus Christ through pluralism, relativism, the New Age Movement, and even Christian and Catholic religious sacraments that remember Christ as a defeated man rather than the living God who conquered sin. The true character of Christ and His mission—as well as His offer to us of life free from the power of sin—are all forgotten.

In these last days, it is crucial that we determine whether we are following the true Holy Spirit or a counterfeit.

JESUS—THE ONLY GOD?

How are we to interpret the drive towards Christian unity in the ecumenical movement and the wider goal of religions culminating in one world religion? Can all religions really be one?

If every religion believes whatever they want, that directly affects the existence of truth. They can’t all be true, can they? If so, then truth is just an opinion and nothing more.

If every religion believes whatever they want, that directly affects the existence of truth. They can’t all be true, can they? If so, then truth is just an opinion and nothing more.

ⁱ “About the WCC Logo,” World Council of Churches Website; <http://oikoumene.org>

Religious Pluralism?

Some people think that believing in Jesus Christ as the only way to be saved is arrogant, narrow minded, and intolerant. Statements about exclusive belief in Jesus have even been considered hate speech. These people claim *religious pluralism*: the philosophy that all religions are equally true and all lead to salvation.

Believing that all religions have the truth is simply illogical, especially if some religions claim to hold the only truth.

But when it comes to Christianity, which states that Jesus is the only way to salvation, pluralism is wrong. In reality, pluralism is just as exclusive as Christianity because it excludes anyone who believes in a single path to God. Therefore, pluralism contradicts itself by admitting that some religions are false. Believing that all religions have

the truth is simply illogical, especially if some religions claim to hold the only truth.

The Christian faith is based on the Bible. There are historical, archeological, prophetic, and personal reasons for some to place such faith in a book. But the Christian has also the natural world as evidence of a loving and wise Creator. Scientists and surgeons of all ages have admitted that only a designer and Creator could account for the lavish complexity of Earth.

What does the Bible say about Salvation?

Is it possible to believe in the Bible and at the same time to believe that salvation can be gained through other religions such as Buddhism or Hinduism? Let us go to the Bible itself and find the answer:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved [Romans 10:13].

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me [John 14:6].

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved [Acts 4:12].

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life [1 John 5:11-12].

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly [John 10:7-10].

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves [Matthew 7:13-15].

It is not arrogant to believe that Jesus is the only way. The Bible clearly teaches in these verses that He is the only way to salvation and that all other ways are a counterfeit of the truth. But this poses a question for many. If Jesus is the only way, are the people who have never heard of Jesus or the Bible or even God for that matter, are they lost? The Bible contains this answer as well:

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin [James 4:17].

God is just, loving and fair. It is His desire that everyone is saved:

For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye [Ezekiel 18:32].

I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there [Psalm 87:4-6]

God is all knowing and all wise; He reads our hearts and judges each of us accordingly. We are all responsible based on the opportunities we've had to know the truth. God will judge people as individuals, not as a group of any kind. But whether people acknowledge it or not, according to the Bible, if we are saved it is because Jesus is the one who saved us.

Many are seeking unity through pluralism or conformity, but again the Bible must be our guide.

In order for all religions to unite in a one-world religion, the belief of Jesus as the only way to salvation must be downplayed. Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims will not unify with Christians if



Jesus is lifted up as the only source of salvation. This principle of Jesus as the only way is under attack in our world today.

Through the efforts of the New Age Movement and pluralistic thinking, the glorious work of Jesus is downplayed. He is being replaced by a “universal Christ that satisfies them all.”ⁱⁱ This universal Christ bears many names and disguises, is acceptable to all religions, and isn’t really God. This universal Christ claims to be just a teacher—no more divine than he claims all humans are. He speaks of global unity, world peace, and justice for all.

Although this false Christ’s messages sound peaceful, in reality they will only bring peace to those willing to comply with global manipulation. The true Christ’s message is of peace that will come when God eradicates Satan and the problem of sin from Earth and humankind.

TRUE UNITY

Christ prayed for unity. But what type of unity did He have in mind?

Word-Based Unity

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one [John 17:22].

This is not unity of the world through compromise and tolerance. Rather, Jesus advocated unity in His Word:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword [Matthew 10:34].

Jesus did not condone physical violence, so the sword He had in mind was “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” [Ephesians 6:17]. The spiritual battle to be fought is to be the battle against the devil. The battle is for our salvation.

It is the devil’s desire to ensure that we never see heaven. The Bible calls him the father of lies. He is the designer of deception. If we don’t understand the Word rightly, we can fall into the devil’s snares. He has multiple paths to destruction. Many of the paths look good and safe, otherwise we would never go down them. Satan doesn’t care if we go to church or even if we claim to be Christian.

Even Christians can be deceived. There are many Christians who are Christians in name only whose lives believe their declaration and who are as deceived as the one that doesn’t know God.

Take heed that no man deceive you...For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect [Matthew 24:4,24].

The Word is our sword against the devil. With it we can be fortified and strengthened to withstand him. When we read the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to lead us as we read, and have a sincere heart that is willing to be changed by the Word

we read, then we are walking in the path that leads towards eternal life.

But if the Word is being discarded, ignored, belittled, or undermined, or even if we pick and choose only the things in the Bible we like to read and want the words to say what we want them to say, our defense against the wiles of the devil is jeopardized. With this in mind, we can take a fresh look at Christ’s prayer for unity. Jesus is clearly not praying for world unity but for Word-based unity:

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest Me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them Me; and they have kept thy word. I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given Me, for they are thine. I have given them thy Word, and the world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy Word is truth [John 17:6, 9, 14, 17].

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is beautifully simple, but it does require that we surrender our hearts to His sanctifying power. There can only be one Jesus and He is the Word made flesh. The true can only be separated from the false on the basis of the Word.

Because the Bible is the key ingredient to true unity, this unity will also produce results that are in line with Biblical truths:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works [Titus 2:11-14].

God wants to use His people. But this requires us to do more than believe in Him. We need to earnestly confess our sins and come up to the standard of the Word without compromising to the standards of the world.

Let us follow Christ’s example. As we unite in humility and meekness, where there are wrongs these will need to be corrected. While we support and sustain each other, we will be able to deal with the erring in a gentle manner [Ephesians 4:15]. God can and will use an obedient community of believers.

True Christian unity is Word-based. Jesus prayed, “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world... Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” [John 17:14,17].

True unity is not about emotions and reckless inclusion, but is based on the Bible alone, which means that sometimes a Bible only attitude will cause friction. Those that prefer a smorgasbord religion, where they pick and choose beliefs

The true can only be separated from the false on the basis of the Word.

ⁱⁱ deChardin, P.T. 1971. *Christianity and Evolution*, Collins, p.130

that suit their comfort level or their personal agendas will not want a Sola Scriptura basis. This is often manifested as disdain, mockery, or hatred towards those striving to make their lives in line with what they find in the Word of God.

UNITY AFTER THE REFORMATION

The Protestant Reformation had based its separation from Rome on the Word of God, and had made the Gospel of Jesus Christ available to everyone seeking the truth.

This free availability of the Scriptures severely challenged the doctrines and supremacy of Rome, and restored the truths that had been lost through centuries of suppression of religious liberty.

The reformers had clearly identified the papal system as the Antichrist system. In the 12th century, the Waldenses gave clear witness of the Antichrist, who they claimed was reigning in the Church. Wycliffe, Jerome, Luther, Knox, Calvin, Baxter, and the other leaders of the Reformation were also united on the identity of the Antichrist.

H. Grattan Guinness says this:

And the views of the reformers were shared by thousands, by hundreds of thousands. They were adopted by princes and peoples. Under their influence nations abjured their allegiance to the false priest of Rome. In the reaction that followed, all the powers of hell seemed to be let loose...Yet the reformation stood undefeated and unconquerable. God's word upheld it.ⁱⁱⁱ

Concerning the Antichrist (*anti* means "in the place of"), the Bible says this:

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God [2 Thessalonians 2:3-4].

Claims like those in 2 Thessalonians have been made by the Papacy:

The Pope is of so great dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man, but as it were God, and the vicar of God...He is likewise, the divine monarch and supreme emperor, and king of kings...So that if it were possible that angels might err in the faith, or might think contrary to the faith, they could be judged and excommunicated by the Pope.^{iv}



The Counter Reformation and the Council of Trent

Rome was not willing to compromise on issues of doctrine with the reformers. Pope Paul III called the Council of Trent, which met in three sessions between 1545 and 1563. Protestants were present during the second meeting.

The Council reaffirmed most of the doctrines disputed by the reformers:

1. Transubstantiation
2. Justification by faith and works
3. The medieval mass
4. The seven sacraments
5. Celibacy
6. Purgatory
7. Indulgences
8. Papal authority to enforce the decrees of the Council, and promised obedience to the Pope from church officials.^v



Rome was not willing to compromise on issues of doctrine with the reformers.

In spite of the separation of the reformed churches from Roman Catholicism, Scripture says that at the end of time the whole world will follow the Beast. This includes the churches of today. The Reformation will grind to a halt, and the principles which lead to separation from Rome will no longer be obstacles—not as a consequence of a change in the attitude of Rome, but as a consequence of the reformed churches compromising the truth.

The Counter Reformation and New False Doctrines.

To meet the challenge and exposure of the Papacy as the Antichrist and the Pope as the "son of perdition," the Jesuits were called upon to counter the reformers' teachings.

Futurism And Preterism

Two Jesuit scholars, Alcasar and Ribera, developed the preterist and futurist systems of prophetic interpretation. Preterism says that all prophecy pertaining to the Antichrist has already been fulfilled in the past.

Futurist interpretation says that these prophecies will be fulfilled in the future—after the Christian dispensation and the secret rapture. Ribera published his futurist views in 1585.

In the 19th century, the Protestant world, starting with the Anglican priest Samuel Maitland, accepted futurism in order to cease hostilities with Rome.

ⁱⁱⁱ Henry Grattan Guinness, *Romanism and the Reformation* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1887): 251.

^{iv} *Ferraris Ecclesiastical Dictionary*.

^v Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979): 410.

Dispensationalism

The prophetic interpretation of futurism was further refined when dispensationalism originated in an “utterance” by means of tongues in a church in England. Most Protestant churches have accepted the futurist dispensationalistic mode of prophetic interpretation, which is the form of interpretation employed in the Scofield Reference Bible. Dispensationalism is a product of futurism and it teaches that history is divided into seven dispensations.

Most dispensationalists are of Calvinistic creed, with a deep-rooted belief in predestination. According to this doctrine, we are so far fallen in sin that we are unable to choose for ourselves. Predestination says that salvation is not conditional, and one is either predestined to eternal salvation or to eternal damnation. All promises of Scripture are also said to be unconditional, making the Jews God’s chosen people, whether they wanted to be or not.

Halting the Reformation

In 1678, Roman Catholic scholars Richard Simon and Dr. Alexander Geddes attacked Protestant teaching by calling the Flood, the virgin birth, and the resurrection myths. Higher criticism and German rationalism have destroyed fundamental beliefs in Biblical truths and, unfortunately, scholars of the reformed churches have accepted these teachings.

In 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the immaculate conception of Mary, thus laying the foundation for Mary veneration. Pope Pius IX also issued *The Syllabus of Errors* in 1864, an encyclical condemning liberal theology, the separation of church and state, and the distribution of the Bible.

In 1868, the Pope called the Vatican I Council. The key dogma arising from this council was papal infallibility, confirmed in July 1870.

Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, John Wesley, and other reformers were ordained by God to do a great work. Unfortunately, the Church that arose after them was not willing to continue the search for lost truths. Denominations became wary of including truths found by others into their creeds. But in the 1800s Pastor John Robinson had this to say to his congregation:

If God reveal anything to you by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it as you were to receive any truth from my ministry; for I am verily persuaded the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth from his holy word...The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw; whatever part of his will our God has revealed to Calvin, [Lutherans] will rather die than embrace it; and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented; for though they were burning and shining lights in their time, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God, but, were they now living, they would be as ready and willing to embrace further light as that which they first received.”^{vi}

The consistent rejection of truth can grieve away the Holy Spirit who leads us into truth (John 16:13). Protestant Churches, by not accepting all the lost truths, began to follow Roman Babylon. For example, almost all Protestants adhere to Sunday worship. Some Protestants even preach purgatory and practice infant baptism.

What is needed today is to finish the Reformation, which reached its apex in the sixteenth century through the ministry of Luther, Calvin and Knox.”^{vii}

The Vatican II Council

Prior to 1960, the Catholic Church was still regarded with suspicion by many, and the ideas of the reformers remained in the minds of many Protestants.

History had made it abundantly clear that the Catholic Church was not friendly to anyone that opposed her. Anyone refusing to accept Catholic doctrine or to submit to Catholic rule had been seen as a heretic. People still felt that Roman Catholics believed that salvation was only to be found within the Catholic Church.

But in 1962, Pope John XXII called the Vatican II Council. This ecumenical council of the Catholic Church **did not** revoke any of its doctrines or statements, but **did** declare that salvation was not restricted only to Roman Catholics, but could be found by all who live according to their consciences. This seemed like a huge concession on the part of the Roman See, but in reality, it was only a half-truth, as the Papacy maintains that only the will of the Pope and the doctrines of the Catholic Church are acceptable for any good Christian.

In the meantime, the reformed churches had been moving towards ecumenism. And the Counter Reformation was doing its work. Jesuits, who according to their oath have no problem posing as anything including another denomination, had been working hard to introduce doctrines contrary to the Reformer’s teachings into Protestant churches.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) had formed in 1948, embracing most of the Protestant Churches, but excluding the Orthodox and Catholics. However, in 1965 the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC created a Joint Working Group to “discuss issues of common interest and promote cooperation.”^{viii}

The Roman Catholic Church also works with the WCC’s inter-religious dialogue and cooperation program. This move on the part of the Roman Church positioned them more favorably with Protestant denominations.

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^{vi} As quoted in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Volume 13 (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1856): 299.

^{vii} As quoted on the New Reformation Ministries website.

^{viii} World Council of Churches Online.

However, the principles of the ecumenical movement spelled out at Vatican II showed that the focus of the entire ecumenical effort was to solidify the Pope's supremacy. In order for churches to unite, they would have to recognize the Pope as their leader.

Priest J. Cornell said, "The final object of ecumenism, as Catholics conceive it, is unity in faith, worship, and the acknowledgment of the supreme spiritual authority of the Bishop of Rome."^{ix} In 1995, Pope John Paul II showed that this belief still stands when he claimed in his encyclical *Ut unum sint* that recognition of the primacy of the Pope and Catholic doctrine was essential for church unity.

Catholic newspaper *Our Sunday Visitor* explains the Pope's attitude this way:

The pope doesn't want everyone to become Latin Catholics... To achieve unity, for example, does not mean that everyone has to celebrate the Eucharist the same way. With Eastern churches, especially, you're talking about a great diversity liturgically, and that's just fine. The Pope does use the term 'hierarchy of doctrine'... Obviously, some teachings are more important than others, and there has to be agreement on those essential points, while leaving considerable latitude on other points that are less essential to the faith [emphasis added].^{ix} S/B Our Sunday Visitor

Here are some of the key events brought about by Vatican II:

The Sunday Assembly

Besides declaring that salvation was not restricted to Roman Catholics, the Vatican II Council emphasized the importance of Sunday worship, not only in Catholicism but also in the whole world regardless of denomination. Since most Protestants worshiped on Sunday anyways, this was a marvelous unifying point that brought Protestants and Catholics together. However, note what Vatican II documents state:

Moreover, any endeavor to make Sunday a genuine "day of joy and rest from work" should be encouraged...celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday, from the outset of their Christian formation "Sunday should be presented as the primordial feast day," on which, assembled together, they are to hear the Word of God and take part in the Paschal Mystery.^x

No Bible-believing Christian can celebrate the Eucharist and take part in the paschal mystery, as these are of pagan origin. Also, Sunday is the first day of the week. The Bible charges us to keep the seventh day holy, not the first day. The Catholic idea of Sunday is really opposed to the Protestant concept of worship, as it is a day founded on tradition and dedicated to the veneration of Mary.

The Eucharist and devotion to Mary are the twin pillars of Catholicism, and are both expressed through Sunday worship. Pope John Paul II stated this in his 1998 encyclical *Dies Domini*:

Significantly, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that "the Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life"... As they listen to the word proclaimed in the Sunday assembly, the faithful look to the Virgin Mary, learning from her to keep it and ponder it in their hearts [cf. Lk 2:19].

With Mary, they learn to stand at the foot of the Cross, offering to the Father the sacrifice of Christ and joining to it the offering of their own lives. With Mary, they experience the joy of the Resurrection, making their own the words of the Magnificat which extol the inexhaustible gift of divine mercy in the inexorable flow of time: "His mercy is from age to age upon those who fear him" (Lk 1:50). From Sunday to Sunday, the pilgrim people follow in the footsteps of Mary, and her maternal intercession gives special power and fervour to the prayer which rises from the Church to the Most Holy Trinity.^{xi}

Ecumenical Partnerships

It is surprising how quickly Protestant churches have accepted the universal primacy of the Papacy.

The Roman Church calls itself the Mother of all churches. However, Protestant churches are not children of Catholicism but rather separators from Catholicism. The Protestant Reformation was caused by men and woman standing for truth against the very doctrines that today's Protestants are accepting from the Papacy.

Prior to Vatican II [1962], there was still a noticeable rift between Catholics and Protestants, but moves towards dialogue between reformed churches were well under way. By 1958, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the International Missionary Council had joined forces, and in 1961 the Orthodox churches and some Pentecostals met with the Council.

In 1963 the All Africa Conference of Churches stated, "Church unity was a unity, which we seek among ourselves, between ourselves and the independent churches, and between ourselves and the Roman Catholic Church."

In 1966 *TIME Magazine* stated that the brand new Lutheran council in the United States sent cordial greetings to the Washington meeting of Roman Catholics. This was stated "as evidence that the spirit of unity is reciprocal."^{xii}

In 1969, the Pope visited the headquarters of the World Council of Churches, which *TIME* reported to be "The real event of the [Pope's] trip."^{xiii} The Roman Catholic Church sent observers to the 1968 and 1975 meetings of the WCC.



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^{ix} *Our Sunday Visitor* (January 14, 1996), as quoted in *Church of Rome versus US Constitution*.

^x John Paul II, *Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery*, no. 25

^{xi} John Paul II, *Dies Domini* (July 5, 1998).

^{xii} "Roman Catholics: Democracy for Bishops," *TIME* (November 25, 1966).

^{xiii} "Ecumenism: Our Name is Peter," *TIME* (June 20, 1969).

Combining Doctrine

In 1975, the growing partnership between Protestantism and Catholicism was demonstrated by the release of *The Common Catechism: A Book of Christian Faith*.

This book offers comprehensive statements of the Christian faith and, according to the editors, was written, “to help ensure that Christians cooperate within their own communities in the common growth of the churches towards that unity in variety, which is the goal of all ecumenical effort.”^{xiv}

This document encourages many compromises, and brushes aside basic Biblical precepts. The following are a few extracts to illustrate this point:

1. The moral directives we might find in the Decalogue, as well as in the Sermon on the Mount are, “to a large extent conditioned by their age and their cultural environment.”
2. Many New Testament passages are described as interpretations rather than historic events. The book says that some statements of Jesus were, “put in the mouth of Jesus” by His apostles; sayings that “the historical Jesus never uttered.”
3. Subjects such as the physical resurrection of Jesus are regarded as a “permanent problem” for modern humanity, and “full of difficulties.” “Its message needs to be reinterpreted in a more meaningful manner since the raising of Jesus from the dead is a concept formulated ‘in the language of the Jewish apocalyptic’ which has hardly any relevancy in our modern sociocultural context.”^{xv}

Consider this statement from the Council of Trent documents, which was recently used to cut down Protestantism on a popular Catholic blog:

Furthermore, to check unbridled spirits, it decrees that no one relying on his own judgment shall, in matters of faith and morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, distorting the

Holy Scriptures in accordance with his own conceptions, presume to interpret them contrary to that sense which holy mother Church, to whom it belongs to judge of their true sense and interpretation, has held and holds, or even contrary to the unanimous teaching of the Fathers. ^{xvi}

The Roman Church has not changed its attitude and moved closer to the Protestant faith, despite its apparent ecumenical attitude. Rather, the Vatican II Council did not change one doctrine of faith and the Vatican continues its strict policy regarding the preservation of traditional Catholic doctrine.

Pope John Paul II

In 1981, Pope John Paul II revived the “Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,” a new name for the organization of the Inquisition, presided over by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

Since Ratzinger’s appointment as Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, Cardinal William Levada was Prefect of the Congregation, until his retirement in 2012. The current Prefect is Gerhard Ludwig Müller.

Pope John Paul II also appointed tough disciplinarians to the hierarchy of the Church and stated in 1987 that the “Catholic Church is not a democratic institution... It is an institution governed by Jesus Christ, a theocratic one.”^{xvii}

He was convinced that all opposition to the Church is unacceptable, as *TIME* noted in 1993:

“Opposition to the teaching of the church’s pastors cannot be seen as a legitimate expression either of Christian freedom or of the diversity of the Spirit’s gifts,” writes John Paul. “It is prohibited – to everyone and in every case – to violate these precepts. They oblige everyone, regardless of the cost.”^{xviii}

Despite these bold moves, he expressed confidence that the ecumenical movement would succeed in uniting the churches once again. His book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* says this:

Pope John XXIII, who was moved by God to summon the Council, used to say: “What separates us as believers in Christ is much less than what unites us.” In this statement we find the heart of ecumenical thinking... we need to be more united, more willing to advance along the path toward the unity for which Christ prayed on the eve of His Passion. This unity is enormously precious. In a certain sense, the future of the world is at stake.”^{xix}

In September 1995, Pope John Paul II issued a statement claiming that recognition of the primacy of the Pope is essential for unity. An article in a 2005 *Catholic Moment* read, “Pope: For unity, all churches must accept papal authority.”^{xx}



^{xiv} Johannes Feiner and Lukas Vischer (eds), *The Common Catechism: A Book of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

^{xv} *Ibid.*

^{xvi} Russell Chandler and Don Schanche, “The Papal Visit – Divisive Issues in Church Quickly Confront Pontiff,” *Los Angeles Times* (September 11, 1987).

^{xvii} <https://www.ewtn.com/library/councils/trent4.htm>

^{xviii} John Moody and Richard Osling, “A Refinement of Evil,” *TIME* (October 4, 1993).

^{xix} Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., Random House, 1995): 146, 151.

^{xx} Cindy Wooden, “Pope: For Unity, Churches Must Accept Papal Authority,” *Catholic Moment* (August 10, 1995).

For the Catholic Church, this unity does not only apply to the Reformation churches, but includes all the people of the world:

Christ bestowed unity 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.^{xxi}

All men are called to this catholic unity of the People of God... And to it, in different ways, belong or are ordered: the Catholic faithful, others who believe in Christ, and finally all mankind, called by God's grace to salvation.^{xxii}

The final object of ecumenism, as Catholics conceive it, is unity in faith, worship, and the acknowledgement of supreme spiritual authority of the Bishop of Rome.^{xxiii}

Somehow, Protestantism seems blissfully unaware of the compromise of faith it has to contend with in order to accept papal authority and unity of churches under his authority.

UNITY AMONG CHRISTIANS

Since the ecumenical movement was initiated by Rome at the Vatican II Council, Christianity is striving to bring unity among its denominations. Unfortunately, for this to happen, Bible-believing Christians are compromising on the very doctrines their denominations were built upon.

Protestants are questioning the validity of the separation between Catholicism and Protestantism. Rome's goals are being realized. Through the ideas of Catholic thinkers in society, Protestants are coming to believe that they are not different or special in any way, but that all religions are one under the spiritual leadership of the Pope. Protestants have lost their identity and the reason for their protest in the first place.

The Catholic Church has not made any concessions in its rites and traditions, but is instead drawing the Protestant Church into its ways. A clear example of this is the Catholic Church's introduction of Sunday rather than the Saturday Sabbath.

Here are a few examples of the power the Papacy holds over the Protestant world:

1. THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

The ecumenical movement has successfully included the Anglican denomination, partly due to the work of these men:

Nicky Gumbel

Reverend Nicky Gumbel, the man responsible for the Alpha Course since 1990, says that the differences between Protestants and Catholics are, "totally insignificant compared

to the things that unite us... we need to UNITE around the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus; the absolute essential things at the core of the Christian faith on which we are all agreed. We need to give people liberty to disagree on the things which are secondary."^{xxiv}

He also said that they "make it a rule in Alpha never to criticize another denomination, another Christian church or a Christian leader."^{xxv}

Catholic Bishop Ambrose Griffiths commends Gumbel's Alpha Course for being a "powerful evangelistic tool... it doesn't contain anything that is contrary to Catholic doctrine."^{xxvi}

Michael Ramsey

In 1966, Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Michael Ramsey predicted the reunification of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. His successor, Dr. Donald Coggan, declared that the Pope would have the authority in such a union. Ramsey and Pope Paul VI initiated the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) in 1967 to investigate doctrinal differences. In 1977, ARCIC issued the following statement:

It seems appropriate that in any future union, a universal primacy, such as has been described, should be held by [the Roman] See.^{xxvii}

Robert Runcie and George Carey

In 1989, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Reverend Robert Runcie went to Rome and urged Christians to consider the Pope's primacy as spiritual leader. He wore a ring given to Michael Ramsey by Pope Paul VI, and told Pope John Paul II that, "It was a sign not unlike an engagement ring."^{xxviii}

The successor of Robert Runcie was George Carey. Carey was a committed ecumenist, and chairman of the Faith and Order Advisory Group that deals with church doctrinal issues. According to *TIME*, "he has been closely associated with the charismatic renewal movement, which practices speaking in tongues."^{xxix}

He encouraged parishioners to visit shrines of Mary and rejected literal interpretations of Biblical events such as Creation and the Flood. He has publicly gone on record as a supporter of reunification with Rome.

Rowan Williams

The last Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, attended both John Paul II's funeral and Benedict XIV's inauguration in 2005. According to the Archbishop of Canterbury's website, Williams was "the first serving Archbishop of Canterbury to attend a Pope's funeral."^{xxx} Archbishop Williams wore a

^{xxiv} "Session 13," White Alpha training manual (video V Talk 14): 63–68.

^{xxv} *Telling Others*: 114.

^{xxvi} *Alpha News* (July 1997): 1.

^{xxvii} *London Church Times* (January 21, 1977).

^{xxviii} *TIME* (October 16, 1989).

^{xxix} Anne Constable, Helen Gibson, and Richard Ostling, "Dramatic Choice for Canterbury," *TIME* (August 6, 1990).

^{xxi} Article 820, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

^{xxii} Article 836, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

^{xxiii} Priest J. Cornell, as quoted in Charlene R. Fortsch, *Daniel: Understanding the Dreams and Visions* (British Columbia: Prophecy Song, 2006).

cross given to him by Pope John Paul II and the ring given to former Archbishop Michael Ramsey by Pope Paul VI.

Justin Welby

The current Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, uses Catholic models for spiritual discipline and has a Roman Catholic priest, Fr. Nicolas Buttet, as his spiritual director.

At his 1st official visit to Pope Francis, he said:

Having for many years found inspiration in the great corpus of Catholic social teaching, and worked on its implications with Catholic groups; having spent retreats in new orders of the Church in France, and being accompanied by the Prior of another new order; I do indeed feel that I am [in the words of Pope Paul VI to Archbishop Michael] coming to a place where I can feel myself at home.

Your Holiness, we are called by the Holy Spirit of God, through our fraternal love, to continue the work that has been the precious gift to popes and archbishops of Canterbury for these past fifty years, and of which this famous ring is the enduring token. I pray that the nearness of our two inaugurations may serve the reconciliation of the world and the Church. ^{xxxii}

The ARCIC's Gift of Authority

In 1999, the ARCIC issued a joint statement called *The Gift of Authority* that discusses the role of authority and unity in the two churches. The document promoted Anglican submission to the Pope as a universal leader:



The Commission's work has resulted in sufficient agreement on universal primacy as a gift to be shared, for us to propose that such a primacy could be offered and received even before our churches are in full communion... An experience of universal primacy of this kind would confirm two particular conclusions we have reached:

- that Anglicans be open to and desire a recovery and re-reception under certain clear conditions of the exercise of universal primacy by the Bishop of Rome;
- that Roman Catholics be open to and desire a re-reception of the exercise of primacy by the Bishop of Rome and the offering of such a ministry to the whole Church of God. ^{xxxiii}

With this statement, the Anglican Church has surrendered its Protestant heritage and has subjected itself to papal authority. By doing so, the Anglican Church has officially made itself part of Babylon.

2. THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Lutheran theologian Reverend Carl E. Braaten said, "If Luther were here today he would sound a different call, especially if he knew that his reformation would, in the long run, turn out so many illegitimate offspring." ^{xxxiv}



Dr. Alexander Campbell said, "The worshipping establishments now in operation throughout Christendom, encased and cemented by their respective voluminous confessions of faith, and their ecclesiastical constitutions, are not churches of Jesus Christ but the illegitimate daughters of that mother of harlots—the Church of Rome." ^{xxxv}

In 1974, the fifth volume of *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue* was published in the United States.

^{xxxvi} On December 31, 1994, the *Telegraph of London* carried the stunning article with the headline "Germany calls to ask: forgive Luther."



In 1995, the Lutherans sent a delegation to Rome. Newspaper articles appeared in Germany and England stating that the Protestant churches were seeking forgiveness from Rome for the Reformation.

In 1998, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation issued their *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* and the world press heralded it as a healing of the rift. This document—although seeming to make concessions on the doctrine of justification by faith—did not rescind any doctrines of the Catholic church and was couched in typical Catholic double-speak. Prayers for Salvation still must go through Mary in order to reach Christ's ear. As Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury said, "Rome is *semper eadem* [always the same], but infinitely flexible, when it needs to be." ^{xxxvii}

The Anglo-Lutheran Catholic Church (ALCC), an ecumenical church that is "part of a pan-Lutheran movement leading to eventual visible, corporate reunion with the Roman Catholic Church," ^{xxxviii} released a statement on the Papacy that included these comments:

The ALCC officially recognizes the historical fact that the Pope is the actual successor to St. Peter, the first Bishop of the Diocese of Rome. ...The ALCC officially and emphatically declares that the Pope is not "the antichrist." He never was, and he never will be. We also hold that the Roman Catholic Church is not the "apostate church of the antichrist" or

^{xxxii} "Archbishop of Canterbury to attend Pope's Funeral," (April 5, 2005).

^{xxxiii} Text from page [http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2013/06/14/pope_francis_rcieves_archbishop_of_canterbury_\(full_texts\)/en1-701430](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2013/06/14/pope_francis_rcieves_archbishop_of_canterbury_(full_texts)/en1-701430) of the Vatican Radio website

^{xxxiv} Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Gift of Authority* (May 1999).

^{xxxv} The Post-Standard, Syracuse, N. Y., Saturday, June 11, 1966

^{xxxvi} *The Presbyterian Expositor: A Monthly Periodical*. N.L. Rice, Editor, Chicago 1857

^{xxxvii} Paul Empie and T. Austin Murphy (eds) *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1974).

^{xxxviii} <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10176190/Archbishop-Justin-Welby-I-was-embarrassed.-It-was-like-getting-measles.html>

^{xxxix} Anglo-Lutheran Catholic Church Online.

"the whore of Babylon." ...As Evangelical Catholic Lutherans one of our primary goals of the ALCC is visible, corporate union with the Bishop and See of Rome as an entity of Lutheran heritage in which ever form is most practical. ...The ALCC officially believes, teaches, and declares that the Wittenberg [Lutheran] Reformation was an enormous and tragic mistake which, from its inception, was handled very badly by all sides.^{xxxix}

The Missouri Lutheran synod also claims that the Pope should not be regarded as the Antichrist.^{xl}

At the main Lutheran church in Berlin, commonly known as Der Dom, Catholics and Lutherans hold communal mass. Service leadership alternates between Roman Catholic and Lutheran theologians. Pictures of Mary have been reintroduced, and the ritual of candle lighting for favors from the virgin is once again common practice.

3. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCHES

In South Africa, Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and Dutch Reformed churches are negotiating reunification with the Anglican Church, while the Anglican Church is grabbing the hand of Rome.^{xli}

In 1969, during Pope Paul's visit to the headquarters of the World Council of Churches, Presbyterian Eugene Carson Blake, general secretary of the World Council, acknowledged the historic importance of the meeting. He told the Pope that his visit "proclaims to the whole world that the ecumenical movement flows on ever wider, ever deeper toward the unity and renewal of Christ's church."^{xlii}

Bishop Stanley Mogoba, chairman of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa, said that the great challenge of the different churches is to speak with one prophetic voice to the State. He said that a strong, common base still existed between the churches. Dr. Bam of the Dutch Reformed Church made the following statement:

The time is more than ripe to look at what we have in common, and not only at what separates us.^{xliii}

Professors Heyns, head of the Synod, supported her in this. Pastor Justice du Plessis, known as Mr. Pentecost, and one-time leader the World Council for Charismatic Churches also urged the churches to join forces with the Roman Catholic Church.

In addition to the existing South African Council of Churches, the Church Alliance of South Africa (CASA) was formed in June 1988 to encourage Church unity and act as the government's conscience. An article in the CASA newsletter says, "The Time has come for the children of God in South Africa to realize that they are all—in spite of differences in denomi-

nation, language and culture —part of the body of Christ in this beautiful country."^{xliv}

Just what is causing this wave of reunification? The 1972 article "Charismatic wave of unity among South African churches" says this:

An unprecedented spirit of unity between Roman Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal churches in South Africa was said this week by churchmen to be spreading. On our own doorstep there has been a tremendous response from Roman Catholics and Anglicans far beyond our thinking and asking. Suddenly there has appeared an open door at which members from two different poles—the Pentecostals and Orthodox churches are finding a point of meeting.^{xlv}

4. THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

Both the Russian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox churches have held extensive ecumenical discussions with Rome, and the patriarchs of both these churches have sought reconciliation with Rome.

Pope John Paul II visited Turkey in 1979 in support of the patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church. In exchange for the support, the Pope was permitted to make a speech in the Orthodox Cathedral wherein he alluded to the primacy of the Papacy, without a word of disagreement from the Orthodox patriarch.

In May 2001, Pope John Paul II visited Greece as part of his famous "Following in the Footsteps of Paul" crusade to demonstrate to the world his reconciliatory spirit.

The Russian Orthodox Church has been a longtime enemy of Roman Catholicism. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new patriarch was chosen as the head of the Russian Orthodox Church. To the surprise of the world, the new patriarch was not a Russian, and also had strong associations with the ecumenical movement.

TIME Magazine reported this:

The Pope may no longer be an Italian, but it goes without saying that the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia must be a Russian. Until last week, that is, when yet another unbreakable rule was broken in the Soviet Union. At the resplendently gilded Trinity- St. Sergius monastery in Zagorsk, ceremonial bells and chimes greeted the election of an Estonian of German stock, Metropolitan Aleksy of Leningrad, as the next Patriarch.^{xlvi}

The article also says that an anti-Catholic prelate would have sent anti-Catholic signals to the Vatican. Instead, "The widely traveled Aleksy, in contrast, is a committed ecumenist who for

^{xxxix} Anglo-Lutheran Catholic Church, *The Papacy* (Kansas City, MO): 2. PDF xxxii Missouri Lutheran Church Online.

^{xl} Protestant Reveille (1977).

^{xli} Die Bürger (January 1990).

^{xlii} Dr. Eugene Carson Blake.

^{xliii} Brigalia Bam.

^{xliv} CASA Newsletter (January 1990).

^{xlv} *The Argus* (August 1972).

^{xlvi} Blackman and Ostling, "Victory for a Dark Horse," *TIME* (June 18, 1990).

22 years served as president of the Conference of European Churches, a continent-wide Orthodox and Protestant body.”

Following these events, Pope John Paul II called upon the Jesuit Order to oversee events in Russia, and take personal care of the retraining of priests for this assignment.^{xLvi}

5. AMERICAN EVANGELICALS



Billy Graham is probably the greatest Protestant evangelist of our time. Yet even he has become a supporter of the ecumenical movement seeking reunification with Rome. In 1981, the Religious News Service reported that “Pope John Paul II was closeted for almost 2 hours with the Reverend Billy Graham, the world’s best known Protestant evangelist.”^{xLvii}

The Star quotes Billy Graham as saying that the Pope is almost an evangelist.^{xLix} Graham praised the Pope for pushing forward the religious revival worldwide. On receiving an honorary degree from the Roman Catholic Belmont College, Billy Graham told his audience, “The gospel that founded this college is the same gospel which I preach today.”

Evangelicals in the United States have subsequently accepted reunification with Rome.

Evangelicals in the United States have subsequently accepted reunification with Rome. Thirty-nine leading evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics affirmed each other as Christians, and vowed to reduce conflict between the groups. Such prestigious leaders as former Archbishop of New York Cardinal John O’Connor and Pat Robertson of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, as well as other distinguished archbishops, bishops, and scholars signed *Evangelicals & Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*.

After nearly four centuries of division and hostility, Protestants and Catholics have taken an important step toward unity. Forty key Evangelical and Catholic leaders signed a statement at the Institute on Religion and Public Life in New York City, on March 29, 1994, urging their followers to accept each other as Christians, put aside differences and contend for common civil causes.^L

The drafters of the document included Catholic Richard John Neuhaus, head of the Institute on Religion and Public Life; Charles Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship; Catholic George Weigel, director of the Ethics and Policy Centre; and Kent Hill, president of Eastern Nazarene College.

The document accepts that Protestants and Catholics alike who accept Christ as Lord and Saviour are fellow Christians and members of one Church of Christ. It also recognizes that their “communal and ecclesial separations are deep and longstanding, and that they may never be resolved short of the Kingdom come.”

^{xLvii} “Making up with the Jesuits,” *TIME* (December 10, 1990).

^{xLviii} Religious News Service (1981).

^{xLix} *The Star* (June 26, 1979).

^L *Christian American: A Christian Review of the News*, p.4 (May/June 1994). Editorial: Christianity Today, May 16, 1994, p.16.

Nevertheless, they promise to work together for Christ. The document calls for a strengthening of the relationship of trust:

Christians individually and the church corporately also have a responsibility for the right ordering of civil society...In the exercise 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...We promise one another that we will work to deepen, build upon, and expand this pattern of convergence and cooperation. Together we contend for the truth that politics, law, and culture must be secured by moral truth.^{Li}

Robert Schuller, renowned televangelist and founder of the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California, is reported to have said, “It is time for us Protestants to go to the Holy Father in Rome and ask him how we can come home.”^{Lii}

Schuller has watered down the truths of the Bible and incorporated New Age teachings into his theology. This is attractive to many nominal Christians and even New Age worshipers.

Schuller has watered down the truths of the Bible and incorporated New Age teachings into his theology.

Spiritual formation brings a common understanding between Christianity, the New Age movement, and other world religions. However, they are worlds apart and cannot be combined without serious compromise and consequences.

The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience. - Ellen White The Great Controversy, pg. 588

UNITY ACROSS RELIGIONS

According to the Vatican, all religions need to recognize the Pope as the spiritual leader of the world.

R. Jeffrey Smith of the *Washington Post* said this in 2000:

A new Vatican dictum issued today declares that individuals can attain full salvation from earthly sin only through the spiritual grace of the Catholic Church and that other faiths—including Protestant Christian ones—have defects that place their followers in a “gravely deficient situation” in seeking salvation. The goal, according to a top Vatican official, is to combat the “so-called theology of religious pluralism,” which suggests that Catholics are on a par in God’s eyes with, say, Jews, Muslims or Hindus.^{Liii}

^{Li} *Evangelicals & Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*, ewtn.com.

^{Lii} Robert Schuller, as quoted in Kevin Morgan, *Sabbath Rest* (TEACH Services Inc., 2002): 72.

^{Liii} R. Jeffrey Smith, *Washington Post Foreign Service* (September 6, 2000): A13.

Papal Efforts

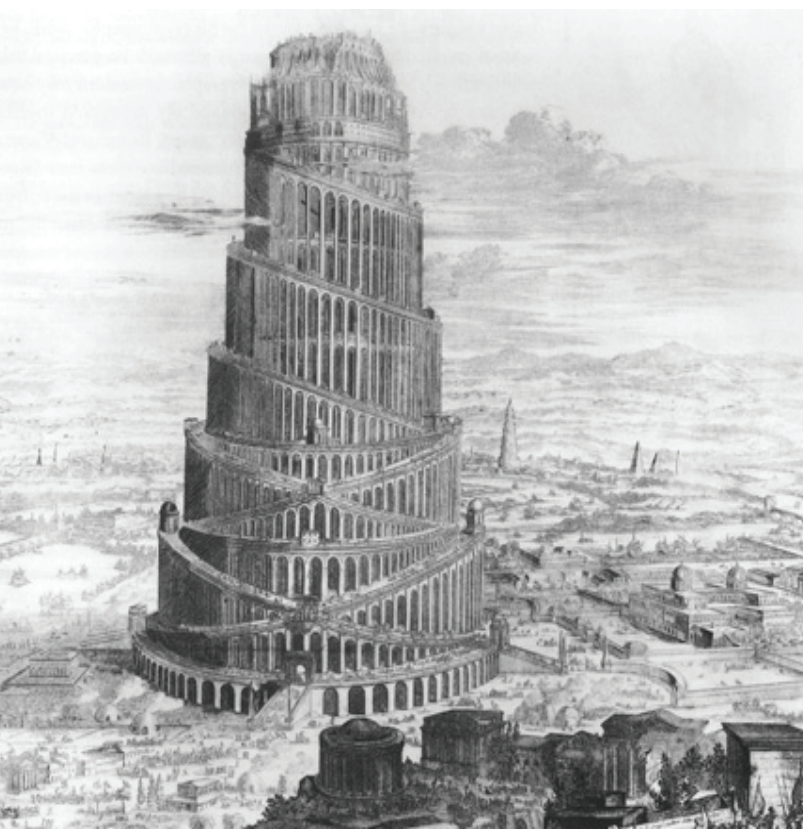
Rome is seeking to unite world religions, with the Papacy as the leader. Pope John Paul II made great strides during his time as Pontiff towards drawing the world religions towards unity. In 1991 Malachi Martin wrote this about John Paul II:

John Paul II as the claimant Vicar of Christ does claim to be the ultimate court of judgment on the society of states as a society.^{Liv}

In 1986, the Pope hosted a meeting of world religions in Assisi. The meeting was televised worldwide, and leaders of Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu religions were present, along with leaders of most other minor religious organizations. Each denomination paid its respects to the Pope. *This video can be viewed on ADtv at: <http://amazingdiscoveries.tv/media/770/all-nations-bow-to-pope/>*

At this meeting, and at subsequent meetings, the Pope was the spokesman and central figure. During his US tour in 1987, the Pope met with Protestant and Eastern Orthodox leaders and asked them to, "work toward a time when all Christians confess one faith." In Los Angeles he met representatives of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism. A similar meeting occurred in 1999:

As reported in the Associated Press, with the Tibetan god-man, the Dalai Lama, sitting by his right side, this October [1999] in Rome the Pope presided at a special council of some 2000 religious leaders of various faiths, sects, and cults... The Pontiff told the assembled Buddhist monks, Zoroastrian priests, Catholic cardinals, Hindu gurus, American Indian shamen [sic], Jewish rabbis, and ecumenical clergy that all must join in condemning the Christian fundamentalists who 'abuse speech' and whose efforts at converting others 'incite hatred and violence.'^{Lv}



At this meeting, the Pope was confirmed as the world's spiritual leader:

All present were in accord on two key points: [1] Pope John Paul II was endorsed by consensus as the planet's chief spiritual guide and overseer; and [2] Religious fundamentalists who refuse to go along with the global ecumenical movement are to be silenced. They must be denounced as "dangerous extremists" full of hate [emphasis added].^{Lvi}

The Parliament of World Religions also propagates the theme that all religions serve the same God. It is noteworthy that the United Nations is the forum of many of these high level discussions and that the Pope has used this forum as the representative of all the religions of the world.

The Parliament of World Religions also propagates the theme that all religions serve the same God.



Jewish-Catholic Relations

In 1986 Pope John Paul II visited the Jewish Synagogue in Rome, thereby becoming the first Pope to do so.



In his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II stated that it had always been his intention to establish links with Israel. He also stated that in one of their discussions, a Jewish leader thanked the Church of Rome for all it had done for God over the past 2000 years.

During the Pope's 1999 visit to the United States, Rabbi Robert Jacobs praised John Paul for being the first Pope to acknowledge Judaism. *This video can be viewed on ADtv at: <http://amazingdiscoveries.tv/media/781/rabbi-robert-p.-jacobs/>*

Muslim-Catholic Relations

The visible relations between Islam and Catholicism have also been astounding. Pope John Paul II visited Syria in May 2001, prompting the following report:

Pope John Paul made history on Sunday by becoming the first Pontiff ever to enter a mosque, and urged Christians and Muslims to forgive each other for the past...The Pope, who revolutionized ties with the Jews by visiting Rome's synagogue in 1985, said it was now time to turn the page with Islam too.

"For all the times that Muslims and Christians have offended one another, we need to seek forgiveness from the Almighty and to offer each other forgiveness," he said in his address to Muslim leaders, including the Grand Mufti of Syria. "Better mutual understanding will surely lead...to a new way of presenting our two religions, not in opposition as has happened too often in the past, but in partnership for the good of the human family."^{Lvii}

^{Liv} Malachi Martin, *The Keys of This Blood* (Simon and Schuster, 1991): 375.

^{Lv} Billy Graham and His Friends (Sharing, 2001): 420.

^{Lvi} "True Bible-Believers Denounced at Papal Conference," *Power of Prophecy* Volume 2000-03 (March 2000): 3. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=81117>
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20010506_omayyadi_en.html

^{Lvii} Reuters International Press

Is this the kind of unity God calls us to in Scripture, or merely another step towards accepting the New Age universal Christ said to satisfy all religions?

In order for the religions of the world to accept Catholicism, the Catholic Church must make it seem that they are making compromises for the sake of unity. Catholic leaders are embracing the concept that all religions lead to salvation. Priests openly embrace Zen Buddhist ideas, and Mother Teresa (1910–1997) was a chief proponent of New Age ideology and ecumenism.

In 1988, a global survival communion conference was held in Oxford, England. A meeting of both religious and political leaders, the conference had this as its theme:

We must merge the ethical and the practical, the politician and the priest, the sacred and the secular. ^{Lviii}

Present at this meeting were Mother Teresa, Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie, Catholic Cardinal Franz Konig, the Dalai Lama, and Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Shinto, Sikh, Zoroastrian, Jain, and Hopi representatives. Mother Teresa said this to her biographer Desmond Doig:

Oh, I hope I am converting. I don't mean what you think. I hope we are converting hearts. Not even almighty God can convert a person's heart unless that person wants it. What we are all trying to do by our work, by serving the people, is to come closer to God. If in coming face to face with God we accept Him in our lives, then we are converting.

We become a better Hindu, a better Muslim, a better Catholic, a better whatever we are, and then by being better we come closer and closer to Him. If we accept Him fully in our lives, then that is conversion. What approach would I use? For me, naturally, it would be a Catholic one, for you it may be Hindu, for someone else, Buddhist, according to one's conscience. What God is in your mind you must accept. ^{Lix}

Teachings like this negate the true Gospel of Christ. Rather than Jesus Christ, a false universal Christ is being worshiped—a pluralistic Christ who satisfies all religions.

Much of modern Christianity has become a form of occultism, incapable of distinguishing Biblical doctrines from demonic ones.

In Jan/Feb 2014, Pope Francis made a speech recorded on an iPhone and played to Evangelical Charismatics at a leadership convention of Kenneth Copeland Ministries. This message and the speech by Bishop Tony Palmer was received with standing ovation. (You can watch the full video and Walter Veith's commentary on [AmazingDiscoveries.tv](#) under *World News*).

END-TIME UNITY

Religious unity, or ecumenism, is just another movement toward the establishment of Babylon, who will eventually persecute those who do not conform themselves to her.

If ecumenism were simply a call for religious groups to stop the violence and hatred that has become much too common, then it would be a good thing. However, ecumenism is in fact a movement towards supremacy of the Papacy—the most violent religious body of all time.

The Papacy's Authority

In 1547, John Knox had wise words of advice regarding the Papacy:

Flee from Babel, if you do not want to partake in the destruction. ^{Lx}

The Pope is the world's highest religious authority. However, this status has not been achieved on the basis of truth but on the basis of compromise. Moreover, the religious principles and doctrines of the Papacy constitute what the Bible calls the Babylon of the end times.

The Second Vatican Council's *Decrees on Ecumenism*, given on November 21, 1964, proves that ecumenism is for the purpose of drawing all religions to Roman doctrine and authority:

*For [Protestants] who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect. The differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church—whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church—do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. The ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles... This is the way that, when the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion have been gradually overcome, **all Christians will at last, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, be gathered into the one and only Church in that unity which Christ bestowed on His Church from the beginning.** We believe that this unity 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 [emphasis added].*

Protestantism and other world religions, by their own admission, have joined forces with the Roman Catholic Church, thus returning to the “Mother Church.” By submitting to Rome's authority, these religions have become part of Babylon. By acknowledging the Pope's leadership, they also acknowledge his doctrines [Romans 6:16].

This is not the true unity Christ spoke of. True unity is based on the Word of God and the dominion of God. Ecumenical unity is based on shared “spiritual” experiences and the power of human leaders.

The Bible warns about the three parts of Babylon: the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. The False Prophet is

^{Lviii} “World leaders, clergy to hold survival talks,” *Toledo Blade* (April 2, 1988): 10.

^{Lix} Desmond Doig, *Mother Teresa: Her People and Her Work* (London: Collins, 1976): 156.

^{Lx} Friedrich H. Brandes, *John Knox, der reformator Schottlands* (R. L. Friderichs, 1862). (German)

the component of Babylon that will produce the false signs and wonders whereby the people will be deceived to follow the Beast and to receive its mark:

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone [Revelation 19:20].

The Second Angel's Message

In Revelation 14, three angels give warnings to all the people of the earth. The Second Angel declares, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" [Revelation 14:8].

Revelation 18 repeats the message of the Second Angel with the added admonition to separate from her:

Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen...And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues [Revelation 18:2,4].

Revelation 18 is a message of separation from Babylon. The ecumenical movement contains a message of unity based not on doctrinal truth or the Word, but on social issues, liturgy, and a watering down of fundamental principles of Christianity. Those that want to join together without the Word as their basis become a part of the end-time conglomerate—Babylon.

Compromise may seem like a good way to avoid conflict, but is impossible if we are to follow God's call to stand for truth. There are only three definitions of truth in the Bible: Jesus is the truth, His Word is the truth, and His law is the truth.

The reformers were willing to die for what they believed. They had studied the prophecies that clearly identify the Papacy as the Antichrist. Let us not reject the prophets and may the following words of Jesus not apply to us:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" [Matthew 23:37].

The day is not distant, and it may be very near, when we shall all have to fight the battle of the Reformation over again.^{Lxi} ■

This article is adapted from *Truth Matters* by Professor Walter J. Veith.

^{Lxi} Henry Grattan Guinness, *Romanticism and Reformation* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1887):1.

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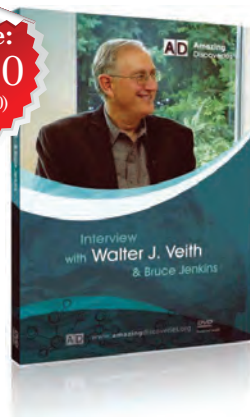
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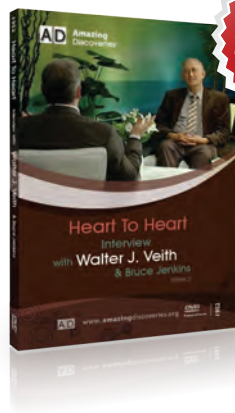
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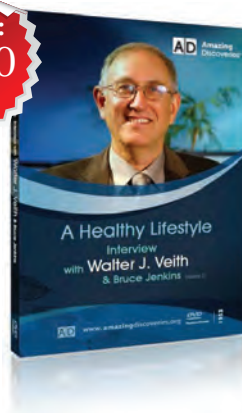
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HOW Planned Giving Works

by Jonathon Cherne, Esq.
Westlake Village, California

Many individuals are interested in making gifts to charity, but are not sure how. This is partly due to the fact that Planned Giving takes many different forms. You can do something simple like leave a portion of your estate through a Will or Trust, or you can do something more complex like a Charitable Gift Annuity or Charitable Remainder Trust. The key is to find the best gift that fits your family and financial situation. There is no “One Size Fits All” with planned giving. What works for you, might not work for someone else. That is why it is necessary to work with a planned giving advisor who can explain the different types of gifts and how they would benefit (or not benefit) your particular situation. Working one-on-one with an advisor leaves the heavy lifting to them, while you can focus on what’s most important—taking care of your family and spreading the Good News.

An outright gift is one of the most basic forms of Planned Giving. But, even though it is simple to do, it is often done wrong. Many people want to give something to God’s work, so they sell a rental property or stock and give the proceeds to charity. While this is a wonderful gesture and helps advance His work, the donor might be surprised when they receive a large capital gains tax the following April. This tax can be a big financial burden. To avoid this, that same donor could give the rental property or stock to charity, instead of giving the proceeds. This would avoid all the capital gains tax and selling costs for the donor, while still benefiting the charity. Since charities do not pay capital gains tax, it is a win-win for everyone.

Even the simplest
gift can be
implemented
the wrong way.

Examples like this show why it is so vital to work with a Planned Giving advisor. Even the simplest gift can be implemented the wrong way. A wise man once said, “Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisors, they succeed.” Proverbs 15:22.

When you began to work with a Planned Giving advisor, one of the first things you will do is tell them about your loved ones and your estate. It is you, the donor, that is the expert about your family and estate. The advisor just assists with creating a plan that fits. You should try to disclose everything

so they can give you accurate advice. Next, you should share your goals—how you want your estate to benefit God and your loved ones. Because each Planned Gift is tailored to fit the needs of the donor, an advisor must obtain all this information to give proper advice.

After you create a plan, an attorney will draft the documents for you to sign. Once the plan is put into place, it is necessary to review it at least every other year. As the years go by your family will change through births and deaths, and your goals might change as well. Additionally, taxes and laws are constantly evolving, so you should meet with your advisor to make sure your plan is current.

Once the plan is put
into place, it is necessary
to review it at least
every other year.

All this is part of being a good steward and planning for what God has entrusted to you. If you are interested in creating a plan, please contact our Planned Giving advisor. Our advisor is here to take some of the burden off your shoulders and to help you work through the process. ■

**For more information, call Dagmar at
1-866-572-9457 (toll free), ext. 225.**

by Joel Kratzke

This is the
last article
of a series
of four.

Seeking After a Sign

I intended to stop. Really. I had seen the stop sign quite a distance ahead and had begun to slow down in plenty of time. Then something caught my attention. My GPS was babbling directions that seemed to not make any sense, and so I was trying to tap the screen to find out the right way to go. By the time I realized what was happening, I was in the middle of the intersection, stop sign behind me, my car still moving. Thankfully there were no other vehicles on this lonely stretch of highway. The lesson for me was this, even when we know and have seen the sign, we can sometimes be distracted to the point of missing it.

Case in point: We have been discussing signs that are not really the signs that God intended for us to put our faith in. Most assuredly, Jesus did many wonderful miracles, as did His disciples, in an effort

...those
who seek
after a sign
were an evil
generation.

to show His power and provide opportunity for those around to be spiritually awakened. But as we have read, He said those who seek after a sign were an evil generation. Having their hearts and minds trained on that which would “wow” the crowd, they were blind to the fact that the Messiah was walking among them. So the people today, as we near the Second Coming of our Lord, are looking for signs, trusting in miracles, depending upon tongues, and seeking

after prophets with pleasing messages. I am reminded of the verse in 1 Corinthians 8, “Charity never faileth: but whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail; whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease; whether [there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away.” Even though God does miraculous things for us at times and we see the gifts of the Spirit evident in the church, these are not what make up our faith. These things will pass, but love never fails.

God’s Sign

So how do we understand God’s love, which is what never fails, in light of the fact that God has given a sign for His people not to follow, but to show? The sign that God gave to us is the seventh-day Sabbath.



Furthermore, we are not to seek after it, but we are to participate in it as a sign to others. You see, this sign is not some miraculous event, some moment of ecstatic jubilation, or some personal need gratified. No, not at all. This sign is a sign of love, of God’s love. Maybe you have never thought of the Sabbath as a sign of God’s love before. Most see it as a command, a sign of God’s authority and sovereignty, which it is. But it is even more than that. Let me take you on a short Bible study so you, too, can see the sign.

The first mention of the seventh-day Sabbath we find in Scripture is in Exodus 16. God rested on the very first seventh day at the end of the Creation week, establishing the Sabbath at that time. But the first time we see the word translated as “Sabbath” occurs in Exodus 16. Here we have the account of God providing manna every day for six days, but providing none on the seventh day, which at first seems less-than-loving until we understand what God is teaching His people, and us. The Scripture says, “*See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.*” Ex. 16:29-30.

God was reinstituting His holy Sabbath day to a people who had forgotten it through 400 years of slavery in Egypt. In doing so, He was also demonstrating that He was the provider, not only of their daily needs but also of their spiritual needs as well. Jesus said He was this bread from heaven (John 6:51), and just as the manna did not spoil on the Sabbath, so Christ’s body saw no corruption as He rested in the grave over the Sabbath.

Look at Deuteronomy chapter 5, where we see the Ten Commandments given again. *"Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day [is] the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: [in it] thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that [is] within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and [that] the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day (Deuteronomy 5:12-15).*

Here we have a second motivation for our keeping the Sabbath holy. God is not only our Creator, but He is our Deliverer/Redeemer, as well. Oh, the love of God for us! While we were yet sinners Christ died for us! Even when we have walked away from His love and grace to live our lives as we want - selfish, sinful and debased - He still loves us. He still offers salvation to us and His Sabbath is a sign of that love.

What the Sign Signifies

Some will contend that they worship God on Sunday because that is the day that Jesus arose from the dead and it is a memorial of the salvation we have through Him. I would respectfully, and yet very confidently, disagree. The Bible is too clear: The memorial of Creation and redemption is the seventh-day Sabbath. Not only this, but as God has described it, it is a "sign" between Him and us: "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it [is] a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that [ye] may know that I [am] the LORD that doth sanctify you" (Exodus 31:13).

That we know *it is the Lord who sanctifies us*. Do we hear that part? It speaks of the very thing God will do for His people at the end of time in order to deliver them.

Revelation 7: 3 says, "Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." Remember that the words "seal," "mark" and "sign" are all interchangeable in Scripture. Even as the wicked receive the mark of the beast, so too will the children of God receive the seal, or mark, of God. And the Sabbath is the sign (mark, seal). God loves you. He loves His church. He has given a sign for us to follow, not to seek after. The next time you prepare for Sabbath - or maybe for the first time, for some - remember that the Sabbath shows without a doubt the love of God for you! And then ask yourself, How will I show my love for Him in return? ■

God loves
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to follow, not
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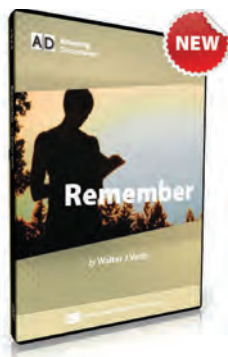
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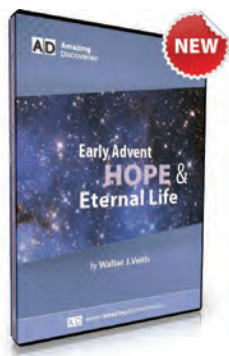
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Why do we so easily forget the commandments of the Bible? Though the word "remember" occurs many times throughout the Bible, it seems that we too easily forget. Walter Veith explores John 14-16 and the importance of remembering to follow the word of God as it is written.

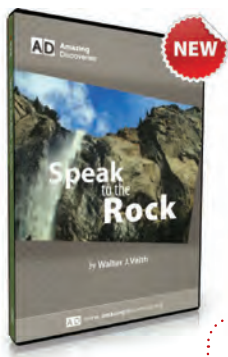
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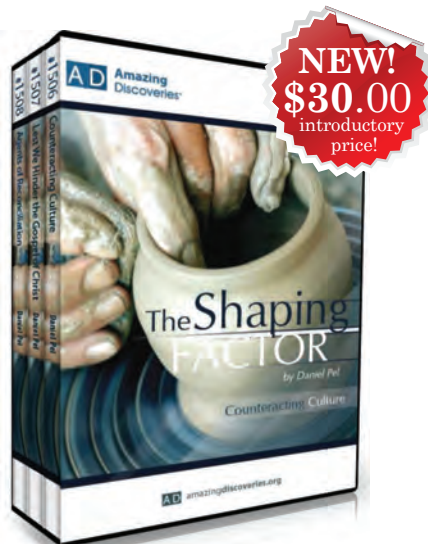
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Pope Francis to Address Congress

Source: HuffingtonPost.com, 3/13/14, [Excerpt]:

As Pope Francis celebrated his one-year anniversary, House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) announced that an open invitation has been extended to him to address a joint session of Congress.

According to a statement from the speaker's office, the event would be an "excellent opportunity for the American people as well as the nations of the world to hear his message in full."

Boehner wrote, "It is with reverence and admiration that I have invited Pope Francis, as head of state of the Holy See and the first Pope to hail from the Americas, to address a joint meeting of the United States Congress.

"Pope Francis has inspired millions of Americans with his pastoral manner and servant leadership, challenging all people to lead lives of mercy, forgiveness, solidarity, and humble service."

"His social teachings, rooted in 'the joy of the gospel,' have prompted careful reflection and vigorous dialogue among people of all ideologies and religious views in the United States and throughout a rapidly changing world, particularly among those who champion human dignity, freedom, and social justice."

"These principles are among the fundamentals of the American Idea. And though our nation sometimes fails to live up to these principles, at our best we give them new life as we seek the common good."

"The Holy Father's pastoral message challenges people of all faiths, ideologies and political parties. His address as a visiting head of state before a joint meeting of the House and Senate would honor our nation in keeping with the best traditions of our democratic institutions. It would also offer an excellent opportunity for the American people as well as the nations of the world to hear his message in full."

(<http://goo.gl/BnWVnq>)

Islamists Demand Levy from Christians in Syria

Source: Reuters.com, 2/26/14, [Excerpt]:

An al Qaeda splinter group has demanded that Christians in a Syrian city it controls pay a levy in gold and curb displays for their faith in return for protection, according to a statement posted online.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), mainly composed of foreign fighters, is widely considered the most radical of the groups fighting President Bashar al-Assad, and is also engaged in a violent struggle with rival Islamist rebels.

Its directive to Christians in the eastern city of Raqqa is the latest evidence of the group's ambition to establish a state in Syria founded on radical Islamist principles, a prospect that concerns Western and Arab backers of other rebel groups fighting Assad.

ISIL said it would ensure Christians' safety in exchange for the levy and their adherence to restrictions on their faith, citing the Islamic legal precept of 'dhimma.'

It said Christians must not make renovations to churches or other religious buildings, display religious insignia outside of churches, ring church bells or pray in public. It demanded every Christian man pay a tax of up to 17 grams of gold, a levy that was common in Muslim states centuries ago.

The directive also bans Christians from owning weapons and from selling pork or wine to Muslims or drinking wine in public.

Raqqa was the first and only city to fall completely under rebel control last year. After repelling an offensive last month... ISIL has turned its attention to setting up a state based on a radical interpretation of Islamic law.

It issued a more general set of restrictions for all residents of Raqqa last month, but this week's notice included the most extensive restrictions yet on Christians.

The recognized al Qaeda affiliate in Syria, the Nusra Front, has demanded ISIL submit to mediation to end the infighting that has killed about 3,300 people this year, saying it will "eradicate" them if they do not comply in the coming days.

(<http://goo.gl/yBWK21>)





The 100-Second Sermon

Michael E Fassbender, Ph.D.

Part 1 of 2

What makes a sermon powerful? Powerful sermons that lead people to genuine repentance don't need to be long. Spiritual success is not necessarily measured in the number of converts. After all, it is the *depth* of conversion that matters. The secret of a sermon that is sharp like a knife, is that it gives glory to God, that it presents a *complete* picture of God, that it proclaims His character and reveals to the audience what God is really like. The psalmist sings:

Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face (Psalm 89:13.14, emphasis supplied).

And that's exactly what God is like: He is mighty, He is justice and judgment, He is mercy and He is truth. Thus, life-changing sermons need to incorporate four vital components: the power of God, the justice of God, the love of God and the truth. But wait! One item is missing. If the message is the rocket, it still needs a propellant to take off.

Nothing New Under the Sun

We live in a time when God expects His church to proclaim the Gospel to a highly diversified world audience. One large subset of that audience in the

westernized world adheres to the so-called "secular culture." Many times spiritual leaders come to the conclusion that today's spiritual environment presents an unprecedented challenge, and that this new challenge calls for novel evangelization strategies. These "novel" strategies are sometimes

borrowed from churches that do not embrace the truth and unique solemnity of the message of the antitypical Elijah.

Does the secular culture really present a novel challenge to the Gospel mission of the church?

The question you might ask is, "Does the secular culture really present a novel challenge to the Gospel mission of the church?" One of the central messages of Scripture is King Solomon's true assessment of the affairs of life, whether they be of a spiritual or physical nature: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Among the devil's most successful tools in destroying faith is the lie that from the time we are born, we stumble from one new situation to the next. Satan wants us think that any case, any difficulty we face in life, is too hard for the Lord to resolve, because it is unique from anything that God has taken care of in the past. It is important to keep in mind that God does have thousands of years of experience in solving the problems for His children and for His church.

Left at Athens Alone

The "One Hundred-second Sermon" was preached around 51 AD. When I read this sermon aloud at my typical reading speed, it took me almost exactly 100 seconds from beginning to end. It may have been that Luke, whom we consider the author of the book of Acts, just provided a summary of what was said; but it may be very likely that he recorded the message verbatim to the testimony of the power of God. The Spirit of Prophecy states that the words of this sermon "contain a treasure of knowledge for the church" (AA, 241). It is, therefore, instructional and important that the church of today examine and carefully consider the words and the message of this sermon that took one hundred seconds to deliver.

What was the background? The apostle Paul was on his second missionary journey. Protestant theologian and pastor Friedrich Gustav Lisco, who authored an exhaustive commentary on Martin Luther's Bible translation,¹ places this journey within the time period of 51-52 AD. In Acts 17, we read that the apostle Paul was sent to Athens, because the brethren feared that the hatred that had been stirred up by the Jews of Thessalonica would put Paul in danger. The Spirit of Prophecy (AA, 234) describes Paul's situation in this way:

¹ Friedrich Gustav Lisco, "Das neue Testament nach der deutschen Uebersetzung Dr. Martin Luthers: Mit Erklärungen, Einleitungen, einer Harmonie der vier Evangelien, einem Aufsatz ueber Palestina und seine Bewohner, einer Zeittafel ueber die Apostelgeschichte, und mehreren Registern versehen. Zum Gebrauch fuer alle Freunde des goettlichen Wortes, insonderheit fuer Lehrer in Kirchen und Schulen", (Berlin, 1834), 302.

In this great city, where God was not worshiped, Paul was oppressed by a feeling of solitude, and he longed for the sympathy and aid of his fellow laborers. So far as human friendship was concerned, he felt himself to be utterly alone. In his epistle to the Thessalonians he expresses his feelings in the words, "Left at Athens alone" (1 Thessalonians 3:1).

In the time of Paul, the city-state of Athens had declined significantly in the glory it had once enjoyed as capital of the "kingdom of brass" (Daniel 2:39). If we take a close look at the image of Daniel 2, we note that the world power of ancient Greece (331 – 168 BC) is depicted as the thigh of the standing, human-like statue. If we go deeper and think about a most accurate interpretation of the details of the imagery provided by God Himself in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, we find an interesting analogy. In the science of physical fitness, core muscle strength is one of the most important features of a strong and healthy musculoskeletal system. The core muscles of the lower back and thighs keep the body upright and keep it moving efficiently. Likewise, Greece must have contributed something very important to a geopolitical system that has been standing strong even until today. What could that have been?

Under Roman hegemony, none of the Greek city-states had any important military or political roles left. While reported population figures for 50 AD appear conflicting, Athens' citizen population had been declining drastically from over 170,000, at the height of its prosperity in 431 BC, to 75,000 in the year 100 AD.^{2,3} Trade, agriculture, industry, and intellectual activities, however, still flourished.⁴ The Romans borrowed art, religion, philosophy, and way of life from the ancient Greeks, and they spread Greek culture throughout their empire. Athens and Sparta, as cities of resounding fame, were allowed to keep their independence. Athens, in particular, remained a center of cultural excellence.⁵ It had one of the Roman Empire's best universities, and even Nero himself went there to prove his artistic abilities in 66-67 AD. As you will see below, what was thought and taught in Athens still has relevance today.

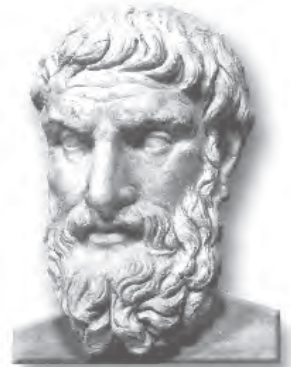
Two Influential Philosophies

While Paul was waiting for his fellow laborers, he took note of the blunt idolatry of Athens. He engaged in seemingly little fruitful daily disputes with the public (Acts 17:16-17), until his efforts finally caught the attention of the Greek philosophers:

Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection (Acts 17:18).

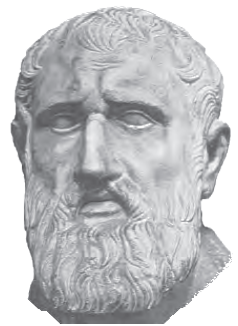
I don't think it is a coincidence that the Epicureans and the Stoics are explicitly mentioned in the Scriptures. Epicurus lived from

341 -270 BC. It is claimed that his philosophy provided the intellectual foundations for modern science and for secular individualism.⁶ The philosophy of Epicurus assumed a view that was based on an atomistic materialism. The ultimate goal of Epicurean philosophy was to "liberate one from fears of death and the supernatural." Epicurean philosophy encouraged adherents to find happiness in almost any situation. It is understood that Epicureanism played a venerable role in the intellectual development of western civilization.



Epicurus

Epicurus was not exactly an atheist, but the materialism he preached formed the basic concept of atheism; Epicureanism embraced a number of passive gods that were not really needed to uphold its central teaching. Atheism just took it a step further and eliminated these passive gods entirely. Titus Lucretius Carus, an Epicurean poet, expresses in his work, "On the Nature of Things," the conviction that everything is made out of invisible particles; particles are in motion in an indefinite void; there is no afterlife and time is not limited; the universe has no designer; humans are not unique; human society began in a primal battle for survival; nature ceaselessly experiments and all organized religions are superstitious delusions. Epicureans "called into question virtually all religious systems and promises. Such enemies of faith found the doctrine of bodily resurrection particularly risible, since it was contradicted both by their scientific theory of atoms and by the evidence of their own senses."⁷ Does that somehow sound familiar to you?



Zeno of Citium

Unlike Epicureanism, Stoicism, founded by Zeno of Citium (335-263 BC), taught a life resigned to "fate," acknowledging limits of self-control and obligations of duty.⁸ Aiming for tranquility of mind and even-

² "Ancient Greek Battles: Can the population of Sparta and Athens be calculated?", ancientgreekbattles.net, (accessed 02/19/2014), http://www.ancientgreekbattles.net/Pages/47932_Population.htm.

³ David Wilkinson, "Decline Phases in Civilization, Regions and Oikumenes", Comparative Civilization Review 33 (1995), 33-78.

⁴ "Explore Greece/History", hellenicadventures.com, (accessed 02/20/2014) <http://hellenicadventures.com/greece/greeceHistory.html>.

⁵ "History of Athens", historyworld.net, (accessed 02/20/2014),

<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ac45#ixzz2tu6WMrM6>.

⁶ "Epicurus & Epicurean Philosophy", epicurus.net, (accessed 02/20/2014).

⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, The Swerve: How the World Became Modern, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2011).

⁸ "Stoic Philosophy of Mind", iep.utm.edu, (accessed 2/20/2014), <http://www.iep.utm.edu/stoicmind/#SH2a>.

Dying was not the end of a person's existence, according to the Stoics.

ness of emotional life, Stoicism was meant to make people happier by teaching them to control their negative emotions. The doctrine of *pneuma* and total blending allowed the Stoics to adopt Plato's definition of death as "the separation of the soul from the body." Dying was not the end of a person's existence, according to the Stoics. Once the soul had separated from the body, it maintained its own cohesion for a period of time. It is important to note that the theories of "natural law" in ethics seemed to stem directly from Stoicism.⁹ Further, we read that:

*Stoicism claimed the adherence of a large portion of the educated persons in the Graeco-Roman world, and it had considerable influence on the development of early Christianity.*¹⁰

Another source mentions that Stoicism was extremely influential in the Roman era, as well as in "early Church doctrine."¹¹ In fact, Stoicism's teaching on the soul and body and its "natural law" ethics have been passed down through the centuries in by the Roman Catholic Church and are today embodied in modern Catholicism. Stoicism has never died.

The teaching of "natural law" holds that any binding rule or moral behavior can be deduced simply via the utilization of human reason. This directly opposes the Biblical teaching that human reason is of a fallen nature. Thus, only through acceptance of God's character as revealed in Scripture, through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and through the interaction with the Holy Spirit, does man have access to the unfallen, supreme Divine moral standard. In brief, man can never attain a good character simply through the exercise of human reason, unless he submits to Divine influence, that is, to the teaching of the Word of God and the influence of the Holy Spirit. King David clearly sets forth the path to moral excellence:

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way (Psalm 119:104).



God's law is first; acceptance of God's law leads to understanding, which, in turn, results in good behavior.

One more striking aspect is that, beyond defining moral rules, Stoic thought drew from Chaldean (Neo-Babylonian) teaching and was instrumental in the promotion of star and sun-worship in the Hellenistic age and throughout the age of the Roman Empire:

*This sidereal theology, founded on ancient beliefs of Chaldean astrologers, transformed in the Hellenistic age under the twofold influence of astronomic discoveries and Stoic thought, [was] promoted, after becoming a pantheistic Sun-worship, to the rank of official religion of the Roman Empire.*¹²

*Zeno's successor Cleanthes of Assos (331-232 BC) compared the universe to a human being, and the realm of fixed stars to the soul. Both were the greater concentration of spirit in their respective realms, and the stars could therefore be worshipped.*¹³

From the features pointed out above, we see that Roman Catholicism was heavily influenced by Stoicism.

From the features pointed out above, we see that Roman Catholicism was heavily influenced by Stoicism. These were not the doctrines of the Scripture-based church in the wilderness (Revelation 12:6), nor those of the early Protestant church, which embraced *sola scriptura*. Nor will the remnant church of those, who "keep the commandments of God and keep the faith of Jesus", ever exalt "natural law" above divine revelation. Indeed, available sources¹⁴ confirm that "The natural law is central to Roman Catholic moral theology".

It appears that the Epicureans were influential in paving the way for modern secularism through materialistic, individualistic atheism. Stoicism, on the other hand, provided the backbone for Roman Catholic morality, namely "natural law." While the head of the statue in Daniel 2 symbolized Babylon, it wasn't until the Greek empire that the world-views of atheistic materialism and "natural law" gained momentum as they formed into the "civilized philosophies" of learned men. They finally provided the "core strength" to the tall-standing, proud statue of end-time superpowers. Note that both Epicurus and Zeno of Citium were contemporaries of Alexander III of Macedon (356-323 BC), aka "Alexander the Great," the founder of the Greek empire. The three together prepared for the statue to stand on two legs beginning 331BC.

Based on this consideration, it is not entirely wrong to postulate the following typology: Epicureans and Stoics were types and probably even the forerunners of

⁹ "Stoicism", plato.stanford.edu, (accessed 02/20/2014), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/stoicism/>.

¹⁰ "Stoicism", ecole.evansville.edu, (accessed 02/20/2014), <http://ecole.evansville.edu/articles/stoicism.html>.

¹¹ B. Benham, "Epicurean & Stoics", Honors 2101, Fall 2006, vega.hum.utah.edu, (accessed 02/20/2014).

¹² Franz Cumont, "Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans" (reprint, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960), pp. 55, 56.

¹³ "Stoicism", religionfacts.com, (accessed: 02/28/2014), <http://www.religionfacts.com/greco-roman/sects/stoicism.htm>

¹⁴ Richard M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989).

two major end-time forces that would oppress God's church and oppose God's Word. In the book of Revelation, atheistic secularism is represented by the "beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit", "spiritually" called Egypt (Revelation 11:7,8), pointing back to Pharaoh's open defiance of the God of the Israelites (Exodus 5:2). Egypt also stands for the spiritual "King of the South" as typified in Dan 11. Likewise, one of the powers that came from the geographical north after the writing of Daniel 11, was Rome. Hence, the spiritual "King of the North" represents the "sea beast" power (Revelation 13), or the end-time Roman church.

Paul had been more or less "detained" by representatives of these two influential Greek schools of thought that comprised the intellectual A-list of Athens. The apostle was then forced to give a detailed testimony of his faith:

And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? (Acts 17:19).

The Spirit of Prophecy writes:

Here Paul did not meet with an ignorant, credulous populace, as at Lystra, but with a people famous for their intelligence and culture.

Some [of the great men of Athens] were prepared to ridicule the apostle as one who was far beneath them both socially and intellectually, and these said jeeringly among themselves, "What will this babbler say?" (AA, 233, 235).

In the next issue, we'll take a closer look at the function and purpose of the Areopagus in the times of Paul, an intriguing symbolism begins to unfold. ■

...to be continued...

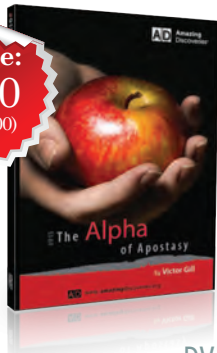
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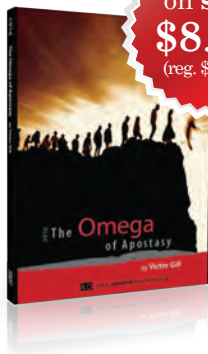


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