

Unity at all Cost?

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.¹

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. Is Jesus the only God?

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**:

1. **Dogmatic unity** is the binding of people together through principles and doctrine. Dogmas can include words of the church fathers, sacraments, and liturgies.
2. **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 (2Corinthians 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.

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.

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 belie 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 that live up to the light that He has given them – those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 12:7).

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 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.

In light of this, 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.

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

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 R. Maitland, accepted futurism in order to cease hostilities with Rome.

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 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.

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." - as quoted in Charlene R. Fortsch, *Daniel: Understanding the Dreams and Visions* (British Columbia: Prophecy Song, 2006).

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.

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 1995 *Southern Cross* read, "Pope: For unity, all churches must accept papal authority."^{xx}

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."^{xxxi} Archbishop Williams wore a 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 "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 whichever 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 South 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 denomination, 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 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.^{xLvii}

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.”^{xLviii}

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.”^L

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.^{Li}

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."

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.
Lii

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."^{Liii}

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 worshippers.

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," page 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. L^{iv}

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. L^v

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.' L^{vi}

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).** L^{vii}*

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.

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-roberts-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." Lviii

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

Blurring the Lines

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. Lix

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.^{Lx}

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 a standing ovation. You can watch the full video and Walter Veith's commentary on www.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. ^{Lxi}

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 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.^{Lxii}

This article is adapted from *Truth Matters* by Professor Walter J. Veith, an international speaker who has studied Biblical issues in-depth in his quest for truth. His popular series *Genesis Conflict* brings the debate between Creation and evolution to a new climax as he dissects the arguments with a scientific eye. His highly-acclaimed series *Total Onslaught* sheds light on the state of the world today as we move to a one-world government and an anticipated apocalypse.

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