

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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*Copyright 2003 John W. Robbins Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692*

*Email: Jrob1517@aol.com*

*Website: www.trinityfoundation.org*

*Telephone: 423.743.0199*

*Fax: 423.743.2005*

## BLEATING WOLVES

### THE MEANING OF EVANGELICALS AND CATHOLICS TOGETHER

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John W. Robbins

When six of us started The Trinity Foundation in 1977, it was a shoestring operation. In many ways it still is. But God has blessed us tremendously, bringing to us his people who understand the importance and the uniqueness of our work and generously support it. I say the importance and uniqueness of our works, not because we intend to boast, but because we see no other group, organization, or publication in America promoting the system of ideas that we promote. Some groups have much of the truth, some have merely snippets, but all adopt ideas from human philosophy or from church tradition; or they garble the Bible's clear message of salvation; or they deny that there is a system of truth in Scripture; or they deny that the Bible has a systematic monopoly on truth; or they have an animus against Gordon Clark, and so they refuse to read his books and warn others not to read them. Whatever their error, what they produce is at best semi-Christian or sub-Christian, to put it charitably. At this point in church history, adulterated Christianity is impotent to stop or even to slow the world's descent into a new Dark Age.

What Luther and Calvin and their followers achieved in the sixteenth century, by the grace and power of God, was a full, consistent, bold, and accurate proclamation of the whole counsel of God. They did it by asserting the foundational truths of the Scriptures clearly and consistently: The Bible alone is the Word of God; and justification is by means of faith alone in Christ's life, death, and righteousness alone, by grace alone. The Gospel of justification by faith alone filled their minds. Luther wrote: "Whoever departs from the article of justification does not know God and is an idolater. For when this article has been taken away, nothing remains but error, hypocrisy, godlessness, and idolatry, although it may seem to be the height of truth, worship of God, holiness, and so forth." Calvin asserted, "Whenever the knowledge of it [justification by faith alone] is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the Church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown."

In the sixteenth century the Gospel turned the world upside down, just as it had in the first century after Christ, when the apostles and disciples preached throughout the Roman Empire. What we need today is

another clear, bold, accurate, and consistent proclamation of Christianity. But some of the churches and para-church organizations that ought to be standing shoulder to shoulder with us in this theological war are AWOL. Some of them, in fact, snipe at us from the rear. My files contain many letters from pastors and para-church leaders who boldly attack us for our bold attacks (the irony is lost on them) on unbelief, error, and false teachers. Some of these correspondents have threatened everything from public humiliation to litigation to utter destruction. In 1988, one anonymous critic sicced the Internal Revenue Service on The Trinity Foundation for an audit that lasted eight years, an audit that resulted in one of our books – *Pat Robertson: A Warning to America* – being banned by the federal government. And some of the churches and para-church organizations who ought to be fighting alongside of us in this theological war have defected, and they are now fighting for the enemies of Christ. Mr. Marvin Olasky, editor of *World* magazine, in which we advertised this Conference, attacked our ad in the October 10 issue, after the magazine had accepted both the ad and our money. He described our ad as "obnoxious," "ornery," "pointed," and "baiting;" and the publisher, Mr. Joel Belz, who also happens to be chairman of the board of Covenant College, declared the ad "inappropriate" for *World* magazine. It seems that Belz's and Olasky's attack was precipitated by a few Roman Catholic readers who cancelled or threatened to cancel their subscriptions to *World*. Undoubtedly they had been attracted to the magazine by its subscription offers promoting the books of William Bennett, chairman of the Catholic Campaign for America. For *World*, revenue, not truth, is the bottom line.

The Trinity Foundation has *not* grown, need I say, because our books are bestsellers. They sell slowly but steadily, mostly by word of mouth. We sell more books to secular bookstores than to so-called Christian bookstores. As for gifts to the Foundation, no denomination, not even a single congregation, financially supports our work. Our annual budget is less than the reported salaries of some officers of the Presbyterian Church in America. Our only supporters are faithful Christian families and individuals who understand the rampant apostasy of the times and oppose it. They will receive a great reward in Heaven for the help they have given us over the years. For

twenty years, God has used them to give The Trinity Foundation the resources to publish more than 50 books, some in multiple editions, about 170 *Trinity Reviews*, dozens of audio tapes, and six tracts, some of which have been distributed by the hundreds of thousands. We have readers on every continent except Antarctica; we ship free books regularly to Africa, India, and Asia in response to Christians who write to ask us for them, and by the end of this year, God willing, we will have a major website, which will offer all our *Reviews* to everyone on the planet who has internet access. So despite the efforts of our adversaries, and the neglect of most churches, The Trinity Foundation has continued to grow.

### ***Theology Wars***

In the present theology wars, we ought to know who our allies and who our enemies are. As a Presbyterian, I have no sympathy with those deluded Presbyterians who seem to think it is worse to be a Baptist than it is to be a Roman Catholic or an Anglican; nor with those deluded Baptists who think that the Reformation is irrelevant and unimportant, because Baptists are allegedly not Protestants. As a Reformed Christian, I have no sympathy with the desire in some so-called Reformed circles to whitewash the priest-, flea-, and rat-infested Middle Ages; to cover up the Roman State-Church holocaust in the New World at the time of the conquistadors; or to be silent about the anti-Christian Roman State-Church herself. As a Christian, my sympathy is with the sixteenth century Reformers and with all those who preceded them during a thousand years of darkness in Europe, saints whose names we do not know, whose stories have been forgotten, whose memories have been deliberately obliterated by the hellish combination of ecclesiastical and political power that slaughtered them for their faith. Our allies today are those who understand the issues of the Reformation and believe those truths to be central and indispensable to the Christian faith. That means that Romanists are not our allies, nor are Arminians, nor liberals, nor modernists, nor neo-orthodox, nor neo-evangelicals, nor Anglicans, nor Charismatics, nor Pentecostals, nor most Lutherans, nor most Presbyterians, nor most Baptists. But God has his remnant, and if we are faithful in proclaiming his Word, he will call and assemble his people through that proclamation, causing them to believe his truth. Our job

is Isaiah's job: It is to speak truth to the remnant. If we were attempting to please men, we would not be servants of Christ.

In the midst of this rampant apostasy in the United States and rabid anti-Christianity worldwide, I want to discuss briefly what has brought us to the present situation, and where we may expect the future to take us. I have written extensively in *The Trinity Review* about one of the more recent and visible manifestations of apostasy in America, Evangelicals and Catholics Together. It is, as its leaders boast, part of the ecumenical movement – not the old ecumenical movement, which tried to unite church organizations while largely ignoring their creeds, but a new ecumenical movement that is far more dangerous. The new ecumenism wants to unite church organizations, to be sure, but it first wants to make it clear that there are no significant theological differences between the churches. In fact, its leaders seem to be convinced that, theologically, there isn't a dime's worth of difference between most Protestant churches and the Roman State-Church. And you know, in one sense, they are right. Today's Protestant churches are almost as corrupt and apostate as the Roman State-Church herself.

Charles Colson, one of the leaders of this new ecumenical movement, expressed his fundamental ecumenical idea in these words:

"The pain and distrust between Catholics and Protestants goes [*sic*] back centuries. The church has often been plagued by wars within her walls, crippling her in her battle against the encroaching armies of secularism. But at root, those who are called of God, whether Catholic or Protestant, are part of the same Body. What they share is a belief in the basics: the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, His bodily resurrection, His imminent return, and the authority of his infallible Word. They also share the same mission: presenting Christ as Savior and Lord to a needy world.... It's high time that all of us who are Christians come together regardless of the differences in our confessions and our traditions and make common cause to bring Christian values to bear in our society. When the barbarians are scaling the walls, there is no time for petty quarreling in the camp."

Colson first asserts that "the church" has been crippled by wars within her walls. He says that Romanists and

Protestants are part of the same church. What makes them part of the same body is their common doctrine, and Colson lists five fundamental doctrines held in common. Sometimes this point is made in a more scholarly way when someone asserts that Protestants have the early councils – the so-called ecumenical councils--in common with the Roman State-Church. Robert Zins has written an excellent analysis of one book by the Thomist Norman Geisler and Ralph E. Mackenzie that makes this contention. Whether stated in the popular way Colson says it, or more formally as scholars say it, this fundamental doctrinal unity between the systems of Romanism and Protestantism does not exist. Take, for example, the single issue of Scripture: Colson calls the common doctrine "the authority of His infallible Word." But what is common about it? Romanism and historic Protestantism have different Bibles; Rome says there are 73 books and a few fragments; historic Protestantism says there are 66 books and no fragments. Second, Rome says that she wrote the books of Scripture, and not only did she write them, she approves and authenticates them. Historic Protestantism says that the books of Scripture are prior to the church, they called forth and created the church; and they judge and authenticate the church. Third, Romanism denies the sufficiency, inerrancy, historical reliability, scientific accuracy, and clarity of Scripture; historic Protestantism asserts all these. Romanism and historic Protestantism have nothing in common on the doctrine of Scripture. Those who assert that they do – such as Charles Colson – simply display their ignorance of what both Rome and the Scriptures teach.

Furthermore, if one were to look at the rest of the so-called fundamental common doctrines, he would find similar divergences: The Bible says Christ was born of a virgin, but not a sinless, perpetual virgin who was bodily assumed into Heaven where she reigns as Queen of Heaven and functions as Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix. The historical mother of Jesus, a godly young Hebrew woman, and the Virgin Mary in Roman theology are different persons, just as the historical Jesus and the liberal Jesus are different persons. The Roman State-Church did not invent, but she enthusiastically adopted and perfected as her central theological method, the art of equivocation. The Jesuits then raised the art of equivocation to a science. As Christians, we must never be fooled by two people using the same words but ascribing different meanings

to those words. We must never forget that the meaning of terms is determined by the system in which they appear. When Paul said in Athens, "In him we live and move and have our being," he was not asserting Greek pantheism, although he quoted a Greek. He did not sign a manifesto with the philosophers of Athens setting forth what they agreed on. Paul used the same Greek words as the pagans, but their meaning had changed, being determined by the Christian system of thought in which Paul placed them. Today there are many pious fools operating seminaries, churches, and para-church organizations who have yet to learn that elementary point of language and logic. They think that because genuine Protestants use some of the same words as Romanists, or because Romanists use some of the same words as the Bible, that they are all talking about the same thing. They should be required to take a course in logic and to memorize the definition of "equivocation."

Colson goes on to say, after asserting that Protestants and Romanists have fundamental doctrines in common, that we should put aside the remaining minor doctrines and unite to fight secularism. Why Colson finds secularism a greater threat than false religions, I do not know. The greatest enemies of Christianity have always been false religions. It was not secularists who crucified Christ; it was false religionists. It was not secularists who persecuted Christians in the first century; it was false religionists. It was not secularists who ruined ancient Israel; it was false religionists. The ancient prophets denounced the false religions of their times. Quite frankly, friends, the eighteenth century Enlightenment did less harm to Christianity than Romanism or twentieth century modernism. Colson, being a political animal, calls for a united front against the barbarians scaling the walls. He denies that the barbarians are already within the walls, that barbarians ruled and ruined virtually all the churches for a thousand years – and for the past 500 years, most of the churches professing to be Christian. If we are going to make alliances for political purposes, why should Christians not ally themselves with secularists to protect ourselves against the growing power of the Roman State-Church? But of course all such alliances – whether with false religionists or secularists – are forbidden by Scripture.

Had Charles Colson lived in the first century, he would have scolded Paul for criticizing and cursing the

Judaizers. After all, the Judaizers agreed on most fundamental doctrines with the Galatians and even with Paul, and their help was needed to fight the pagan barbarians assaulting Western civilization. What was Paul thinking? Surely he should have agreed at least to a co-belligerency (to use the late Francis Schaeffer's phrase) with the Judaizers against the pagans. Instead, Paul cursed the Judaizers over some minor point of doctrine like justification and divided the fledgling and struggling church, even though the Judaizers believed in God, the deity of Christ, his birth of a virgin, his return to Earth, and the authority of the Scriptures. We have no reason to doubt that the Judaizers believed the fundamental doctrines that Colson says Romanists and Protestants have in common. Paul, judged by Colson's standards, was a divisive fool. Paul not only did not seek a co-belligerency with the Judaizers, he did not seek to co-evangelize the world with them. Paul missed the opportunity to construct a united front in the culture wars of his day. Had Paul done so, Western Civilization might have been saved and the Roman Empire might never have fallen to the barbarians scaling the walls. If we accept Colson's premises and argument, we must conclude that Edward Gibbon and the pagan Romans were right, and Augustine was wrong: The fall of Rome was indeed the fault of the Christians.

Had Charles Colson lived in the sixteenth century, he would have berated Luther and Calvin for their divisiveness in the face of the imminent threat from the Turk. In fact, the Reformers were repeatedly criticized for splitting Christendom when Islam threatened it. But Luther, Calvin, and Paul knew what is important, and what is important is not a united political or social front – and certainly not a united theological front – against pagans and secularists; it is the Gospel. On truth – especially the truth of justification by faith alone – there can be no compromise, even if it means splitting churches. Until American Christians learn that lesson, we will continue our descent into the darkness of papal Rome.

Part of the immediate problem is that many so-called evangelical churches and leaders spent much of the mid-twentieth century separating themselves from those who preached separation from unbelief. The neo-evangelicals had such a horror of separation that they had to separate from the separationists. Carl Henry was

one of the leaders of the neo-evangelicals. He and others wanted to lead a movement that would distance itself from fundamentalism, and neo-evangelicalism was born. This in turn led quickly to Billy Graham's acceptance of liberal churches as sponsors of his crusades in the 1950's, and in the 1960's, to acceptance of Romanist churches as sponsors of the crusades. What the Bible teaches on theological and ecclesiastical separation was ignored; and compromise, though under different labels, became the *modus operandi* of the neo-evangelicals. It was called cooperation – and who is anti-social enough to oppose cooperation? It was called engagement, and who is isolationist enough to reject engagement? It was called co-belligerence, a metaphor borrowed from war in which two parties fighting a third party do not fight each other. But the idea of co-belligerence – let alone the notions of cooperation and theological alliance – is itself a betrayal of Christ; it is abandoning theological warfare for cultural warfare. Co-belligerence involves deciding that Christians will neither criticize Romanism nor evangelize Roman Catholics (nor criticize Arminianism nor evangelize Arminians, nor criticize Judaism nor evangelize Jews), for example, because they are our allies in the Culture Wars against the secularists. But fighting Culture Wars is not the Great Commission; Scripture knows only Theology Wars, and in those Wars, *all* un-Biblical thoughts and institutions are the enemies of Christ. Making a separate peace with any one of them, as co-belligerency requires, is treason to Christ.

Some American churchgoers have become interested in these Culture Wars partly because of the Cultural Mandate. In some circles the Cultural Mandate has been substituted for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the United States it has become the conservative counterpart to the liberal social gospel. (In Canada, the Cultural Mandate *is* the socialist gospel.) The Western civilization that Charles Colson and his ilk are attempting to save cannot be saved by the cultural gospel, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. Only the preaching of the Gospel can defeat those principalities and powers. As I explained in my essay "Civilization and the Protestant Reformation," Western civilization is a by-product of the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a by-product of the Reformation. Now, in the name of saving what is left of Western civilization, Colson and his ilk demand that we abandon the

Reformation, make a theological, social, and political alliance with the Roman State-Church, and battle the barbarians scaling the walls. Mr. Colson is ill-educated. His many ghostwriters have not served him well. He neither understands the source of Western Civilization nor what is required to save it. Just as the individual's eternal salvation is entirely in the hands of Christ, so a civilization's temporal salvation depends entirely on Christ, and if his Gospel is ignored, disbelieved, or despised, as Colson and his tribe despise it, then Christ will surely and swiftly bring that civilization to an end. All power in Heaven and on Earth has been given to Christ.

It is clear that the movement in non-Catholic churches represented by Evangelicals and Catholics Together is a betrayal of the Reformation, the martyrs, the Gospel, and of Christ himself. If Charles Colson is right, Martin Luther and John Calvin ought to apologize to the pope. But while it is necessary to recognize spiritual treason for what it is, and to denounce it in no uncertain terms, denunciation is not sufficient. More important than denunciation is understanding: Why have contemporary Protestants abandoned the faith of their fathers and rushed to Rome? Books could be written on the subject; but all I can hope to do this evening is offer some thoughts that might serve as a basis for further discussion and elaboration.

### ***The Etiology of Apostasy***

Exactly what are the causes of the present apostasy? Such things do not happen in a vacuum, mysteriously and inexplicably, nor do they happen suddenly. The present apostasy of American churches should have taken no one by surprise. It has been a long time coming. I want to discuss briefly this evening how the rejection of the whole counsel of God has played out over the past 400 years. The central theme, the dominant motif, of Christian theology since the time of the Reformation is a shift from the objectivity of Scripture to the subjectivity of the believer. This is similar to the development one finds in church history – so far as we know anything about it – from the time of the apostles to the Reformation. The great apostasy in the churches after the time of the apostles until the sixteenth century, when the pure Gospel of Christ burst forth again, and again turned the world upside down, has been repeated in the centuries since the

Reformation. Many of the same movements of thought that appeared in the centuries following the first have appeared in the centuries following the Reformation. There is, however, a dominant motif that characterizes these movements of thought: This motif might be called a movement from objectivity to subjectivity, from theocentrism to anthropocentrism, from worshiping and serving the Creator, to worshiping and serving the creature. It affects various aspects of thought in different ways.

For example, in the field of epistemology, the theory of knowledge, the apostles taught that the Bible, the written Word of God, has a systematic monopoly on truth. *All* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are *hidden* in Christ. *All* Scripture is inspired and *completely* equips the man of God for *every* good work. Man by his wisdom *cannot* know God. In fact, man by his wisdom cannot know *anything*, as Ecclesiastes says. The Scripture shines as a light in a dark place.

But this systematic monopoly on truth, which is an objective, theocentric view, soon came under attack. Some of those churchmen who had been influenced by philosophy wanted to make room for philosophical ideas. Those who had been influenced by other religions wanted to make room for non-Biblical religious ideas and practices. The idea that there is more than one source of truth – variously called nature, reason, observation, experience, mysticism, feelings, philosophy – was accepted in many of the churches. This subjective idea developed in unsystematic ways until the thirteenth century, when Thomas Aquinas wrote his summaries of patristic theology in which he incorporated the philosophy of Aristotle. There the notion that there are two or more sources of truth found its greatest expression in theology. Thomas made the same error Eve had made millennia earlier: Rather than adhering exclusively to the objective Word of God, he espoused the idea that sensation, observation, and experience are sources of truth. Man could discover truth on his own. Epistemology became anthropocentric, not theocentric.

Three centuries after Thomas, the first generation Reformers – Martin Luther and John Calvin, and even before them in the fourteenth century, John Wycliffe – taught that truth is objective, and that there is only one source of truth: Scripture. Echoing the apostles,

Wycliffe had written, "All law, all philosophy, all ethics are in Scripture. In Holy Scripture is all truth." Calvin wrote, "I call that knowledge, not what is innate in man, nor what is by diligence acquired, but what is revealed to us in the Law and the Prophets." Luther stated his *Schriftprinzip*, his Scripture principle, many times. Here is a typical formulation from Luther: Scripture is "in itself most certain, most easily understood, most plain, is its own interpreter, approving, judging, and illuminating all the statements of all men.... Therefore nothing except the divine words are to be the first principles for Christians; all human words are conclusions drawn from them and must be brought back to them and approved by them." Luther made Scripture the axiom of his thought, the first principle. When he was ordered to recant, his reply was, "Unless you can convince me by Scripture and plain reason, I will not and cannot recant." Luther was not adding "plain reason" to Scripture, as a source of truth; he was merely asserting that logic is a part of Scripture itself, and unless his accusers could show him that he is wrong from Scripture and by reasoning from Scripture, he could not recant.

But the decline from the epistemological objectivity of the Reformers began almost immediately, just as it had after the apostles. During the Reformation itself, the Anabaptists, the Enthusiasts, who are sometimes regarded, mistakenly, as part of the Reformation, also rejected Luther's *Schriftprinzip*, and taught that there were two sources of truth: the dead letter of Scripture and the living spirit of oral revelation. The dead letter of Scripture, of course, was objective, but the living voices and vivid visions in their heads were subjective. With such voices and visions, the Enthusiasts needed no Scripture. Far from being part of the Reformation, the Enthusiasts were an eruption of Romanist mysticism in the sixteenth century. Like the Romanists, they too held to oral and written revelation, the oral taking primacy over the written. Their epistemological position was the same as Rome's, and was a denial of epistemological objectivity and *sola Scriptura*.

Tragically, second generation Reformers abandoned the view that Scripture has a systematic monopoly on truth and returned to the view of Rome, crystallized in Thomistic philosophy, that there are at least two sources of truth. Most did not follow the Enthusiasts (Enthusiasm reappeared later), but they did follow

Thomas. Thomas Aquinas, who had been canonized by the Roman State-Church 50 years after his death, had taught that there are two sources of truth, sensation and revelation. Furthermore, Romanists, including Thomas, break revelation down into two types, in order to destroy completely, but not obviously, the only objective source of truth, the Scriptures: Revelation is both oral and written, Rome says, and the oral interprets the written. Protestants did not accept the Romanist distinction between oral and written revelation, but they did accept the Romanist notion that there are two sources of truth, one divine and one human.

This early rejection of epistemological objectivity and *sola Scriptura* led to many errors in both philosophy and theology. First, it precluded the Reformation from ever producing its own philosopher. It was not until the twentieth century that God took a young man from Pennsylvania and taught him some of the philosophical implications of the principle of *sola Scriptura*. His subsequent books developed that insight in ways that, had they been published 400 years earlier, might have changed the history of the world forever. But in the providence of God, the genius of Clark flared only as twilight was falling over the West, just before dark.

Second, this abandonment or rejection of epistemological objectivity and *sola Scriptura* in philosophy led to all sorts of philosophical movements that have paved the roads back to Rome. For example, if there is a source of truth outside of Scripture, then science, observation, experience, reason, feelings, other religions, common sense, philosophy, other inspired books, or some yet undiscovered source might furnish us with truth. Once the objective Word of God was abandoned, a philosophical Pandora's box was opened. Mystics – who of course had flourished during the Dark Ages – reported their visions of Mary, Jesus, God, and other beings. Theologians, relying on their own opinions, developed various sorts of natural theology. Philosophers developed various theories of epistemology in this epistemological pluralism that resulted from Thomas' philosophy. Scientists told us that men are evolved animals and developed their language from grunts and squeals. Consequently, men cannot express or discuss divine truth accurately. Therefore, Scripture itself is mythological. Since man is an animal, logic itself is suspect; it is merely a tool of survival; it is not the image of God in man, for man was

not created, but evolved from lower life forms. Logic has no value as a tool either to discover truth or to explain truth, but is, at best, rationalization. Because no consistently Reformed philosophy developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the schools founded by Protestants used texts adulterated with non-Christian ideas. Those schools quickly lost their theological bearings because they had no consistently Christian philosophical foundations. They became theologically corrupt and apostate more quickly than the general Protestant populace, and through their students, they misled millions of ordinary Christians and churchgoers.

Third, in theology proper, the rejection of epistemological objectivity and *sola Scriptura* supported all sorts of theological speculation, leading to Deism and Unitarianism (since reason is a source of truth), to pietism and modernism (since feelings are sources of truth), to Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement (since revelation is oral and subjective, not confined to Scripture), and to neo-orthodoxy, since Scripture is paradoxical, mysterious, and cannot be understood by our finite minds. All these groups in the twentieth century became allies of Rome, because they all are opposed to epistemological objectivity and the Christian axiom of *sola Scriptura*. Rome has made accommodations for all sorts of subjectivists, from the evolutionists to the Charismatics, because she recognizes that they all reject the Biblical principle of *sola Scriptura*. They all reject the rock on which the church is founded, and the Roman State-Church accepts the devotees of each error so long as they acknowledge the authority of the papacy.

Ecclesiastically, the Reformation reached its zenith in the seventeenth century at the Westminster Assembly in London, the Assembly that drafted the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*. The *Confession* adopted the epistemological objectivity of the apostles and early Reformers: Its first chapter declares,

"The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be

added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men."

Both Enthusiasm and Romanism were rejected. The Bible possesses a systematic monopoly on truth.

A century earlier John Calvin had published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a work which is still, four and a half centuries later, the foremost comprehensive and systematic statement of Christian truth. Between those two dates, the life of Calvin and the Westminster Assembly, the errors of Arminius had surfaced and been condemned by the Synod of Dort in the Netherlands. Despite the Synod's denunciation, Arminius' errors, which were correctly recognized as a return to Romanist theology, prevailed in the churches started by the Reformation. Luther's *Bondage of the Will*, his devastating reply to Erasmus' Romanist theology in *The Freedom of the Will*, had been the manifesto of the Reformation. Tragically no synod, nor, as far as I am aware, any individual Christian, recognized the fundamental problem, which was an anthropocentric epistemology.

This rejection of objectivity and *sola Scriptura* led to all sorts of errant and heretical ideas in all other aspects of thought. In the theory of reality, called metaphysics, the sovereignty of God was denied by both the Roman State-Church and the Arminians. Not only could men obtain truth with their own free minds, they could obtain salvation with their own free wills. Here subjectivist religion ascribed independence from God to the will, as well as to the intellect. Pelagianism was the most blatant and consistent ancient statement of this view within the churches; after the Reformation, first the Council of Trent and then, 50 years later, a theologian named James Arminius denied the sovereignty of God and asserted the independence of men. Arminius, a Dutch theologian (a word of advice to students here: don't trust Dutch theologians) of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, caused a division in the Reformed churches by his denial of the sovereignty of God in at least five respects. Arminius asserted that man is not totally depraved; that election is not unconditional, but depends on God's foreseeing certain acts of elected men; that the atonement is not definite and actual, but indefinite and potential, depending on man's will and decision for its efficacy; that saving grace is resistible by the free will of man;

and that believers, exercising their free will, may lose their salvation and be eternally lost. Each of these positions is an attack on the sovereignty of God, and an assertion of the independence of the creature. Each is an attack on objectivity and theocentrism, and an assertion of subjectivity and anthropocentrism. Furthermore, all these ideas are found in Romanism. Arminius' heresies, though condemned by the Synod of Dort, swept through the Protestant churches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, caring them back to Rome's narthex.

Roman State-Church philosophy is a rejection of epistemological objectivity and *sola Scriptura*. Her theology is, at bottom, an attack on the sovereignty of God, and an assertion of the independence of the creature. Those basic anthropocentric principles are worked out in great detail in Roman theology, and they appear and reappear in a hundred different forms: They appear in the form of natural law theory, on which not only Romanist theology, ethics, and politics are based, but also much Protestant theology, ethics, and social thought is based; in the soteriological notion that in the Fall man lost only a *donum superadditum*, a superfluous gift of righteousness that God had given him, leaving man, not totally depraved, but merely partially depraved, an idea that reappears in Arminianism; they appear in the notion that man can cooperate with God in his salvation; they appear in the notion that the sinner is justified, at least in part, by his personal righteousness,\* they appear in the notion that some sins are mortal, while others are not; in the notion that the bishops and priests can call the Second Person of the Trinity from Heaven and imprison him in a cracker; in the notion that the Roman State-Church has magisterial teaching authority; in the notion that the Roman State-Church dispenses divine grace; and in the notion that the Roman State-Church, because she represents God on Earth, rightfully possesses all power in Heaven and on Earth.

\* "By the early second century it is clear that Christians had come to think of themselves as being justified through being sanctified, accepted as righteous according to their actual obedience to the new Law of Christ" (Robert Webber and Donald Bloesch, editors, *The Orthodox Evangelicals*, 49). See also Thomas Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in The*



*Apostolic Fathers.* Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1959.

In historically Protestant churches Arminius' anthropocentric doctrines worked themselves out in many theological forms: His denial of the definite atonement of Christ and assertion that Christ died for all men without exception logically implied, no matter what Arminius or his disciples said, that all men would eventually be saved. This universalism led first to an assertion that all are saved, and later, to a denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment. As a consequence of Arminius' denial of the efficacy of Christ's atonement, Hell disappears, but Purgatory endures. It is the place, where, after death, men continue their good works and complete their redemption. Both Rome and Arminius teach that good works are essential to salvation, that salvation can be lost by not doing the right works, or by sinning just before one dies. In Romanism, this in turn led to the development of the plausible idea that there are venial sins, sins that are minor and do not deserve damnation, and mortal sins, which are major, and do deserve damnation. Although Arminians apparently never developed such a clear distinction, they achieved much the same effect by minimizing the sinfulness of sin, and restricting mortal sin to "known sin."

Repentance, which in the Bible means simply a change of mind, was transformed by the idea of free will and works, and became total surrender, and finally penance. Pastoral counseling became auricular confession, as counseling was first formalized and finally made mandatory. Once *sola Scriptura* was rejected in the early church, and again in the centuries after the Reformation, subjective sources of truth were asserted, and religious subjectivism became rampant. Having abandoned the objective Word of God as the rule of faith and practice, it became necessary to manage the resulting religious chaos in the churches in some way. The substitute for the Bible that developed over the centuries was the Roman State-Church. Ecclesiastical power was concentrated first in the bishops, then in the bishop of Rome. Over the centuries, the bishop of Rome developed a bureaucracy, called a curia. This institution claimed to be infallible and usurped the role of teacher, which she called by its Latin name, the Magisterium. It is no accident that the Roman State-

Church has claimed the titles Christ specifically forbade to men. She calls her priests Fathers, and she calls herself Teacher. These titles are a reflection of the complete anthropocentrism of the Roman State-Church, and her denial of the complete theocentrism of Christianity. Christ gave his command not to call any man Teacher or Father, as I am sure you recall, because there is only one father, and there is only one Teacher.

In the centuries since the Reformation, the shift from epistemological objectivity to epistemological subjectivity, from *sola Scriptura* to epistemological pluralism, has permeated all of theology. Efforts to control this religious subjectivism in Protestantism also took the form of the development of the power of bishops, as seen in Methodism, Lutheranism, and Anglicanism. Today we have the spectacle of Charismatics and Pentecostals adopting episcopacy as a remedy for disorder in their churches. Without the Word of God, rulers in both civil and ecclesiastical governments opt for authoritarianism and tyranny to end chaos and anarchy. Church order, in which the freedom of the Christian is protected, is founded on *sola Scriptura* – and it is that principle that the Roman State-Church and many lesser organizations have rejected.

### ***The Prognosis of Apostasy***

Given this theological and ecclesiastical deterioration for the past 400 years, which in many ways recapitulates the theological and ecclesiastical deterioration of the first centuries after Christ, we can now see that Evangelicals and Catholics Together and its counterparts in other churches – the Lutheran-Romanist accord, for example – are logical outcomes of the abandonment of the principle of *sola Scriptura*. They are not sudden and inexplicable developments; they are almost predictable. Having realized that there is very little of any theological importance that distinguishes contemporary Protestant churches from the Romanist State-Church; having experienced the splendor of the Roman State-Church, the seductive beauty of her cathedrals, liturgy, and traditions; having recognized the political clout she wields not only from her large numbers and vast wealth, but also from her status as a political institution, many contemporary Protestant leaders are urging a theological alliance with Rome.

Barring an outpouring of the knowledge of God by the Holy Spirit, these trends will continue and possibly accelerate. After Evangelicals and Catholics Together and their Lutheran, Anglican, mainline Protestant, and Charismatic counterparts issue more statements and reach more concords, congregations, perhaps entire denominations, not just individuals, will join the Roman State-Church. Of course, there will be many more individual defections to Rome: We have just seen a trickle so far. The Roman State-Church will bend over backwards to accommodate her prodigal children and welcome them home, yielding everything that does not infringe on her central doctrine, the Magisterium of the Roman State-Church. She intends to become Dominatrix of the World, just as she was Dominatrix of Europe during the Middle Ages. She has already ended, for all practical purposes, the Latin mass; the new Romanist service is much more like a neo-evangelical service than it was 40 years ago. In making such cosmetic changes, the Roman State-Church has yielded nothing significant nor yielded anything permanently, but she has gained a great deal.

I will venture to make some specific predictions: Billy Graham, the most visible leader of the neo-evangelicals, will – should God spare his life – endorse future pro-Romanist statements. He has already offered high praise for Roman Catholics and Romanism, incorporating them into all his crusades. His son Franklin Graham will make further approaches to Rome, as will other Arminian evangelists and leaders. Some prominent leaders who we today think we can count on will either remain silent or endorse the ecumenical movement. The alliance between neo-evangelicals and Romanists in the Culture Wars will lead to all sorts of new joint projects and institutions. It will result in the election of our second Romanist president. It will result in the adoption of more programs at the state and Federal level to funnel money to Roman State-Church and neo-evangelical institutions. The next pope will press even more energetically the ecumenical program of the Roman State-Church, meeting himself with American church leaders, not simply sending his third in command, Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy. Those leaders, in turn, will be deceived by the splendor of the papacy.

As this movement grows, there will, of course, be many who oppose it, but they will become more and more

isolated in their churches. They will be criticized as troublemakers, as divisive, as un-Christian and unloving. Many will be forced to leave the churches they are now attending and will learn to cooperate with Christians who are not of their denomination. Denominational boundary lines will break down completely, as the grand coalition of Romanists, Charismatics, and ersatz-evangelicals gathers momentum, influence, and power. On the one side there will be an international movement for the evangelization of the world. On the other, there will be a remnant of Faithful Christians who will do their best to preserve, protect, and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

All of these prognostications assume that history is drawing to a close, that the time of judgment has come and that we are entering the final conflict. But that may not be so. Perhaps a gracious God will grant repentance to millions as the remnant proclaim his Gospel in every clearer and bolder terms. Should such an outpouring of the knowledge of God occur, should the Gospel of justification by faith alone be proclaimed in its pristine purity and power, then we may expect the Roman State Church to suffer another defeat in her plans for world domination. But we do know from Scripture that she will eventually and temporarily be victorious, only to be consumed by the breath of him who shall come in the twinkling of an eye to vindicate his saints and his Church. In the long run, Christians have every reason to be optimists, not because we are so powerful or so numerous but because the right man is on our side – the man of God's own choosing. One little Word from him will end the tyranny of Rome forever.

**The chart below compares Christianity with contemporary subjective religion.**

<b>Philosophical Theological Locus</b>	<b>Objective Christianity</b>	<b>Subjective Religion</b>
Source of Knowledge	Sixty-six books of Scripture	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-evangelicalism, neo-orthodoxy, and Pentecostalism: reason, nature, experience, observation, feelings, intuitions, common sense, visions, voices, other humans
God	Sovereign, unchanging, rational, triune creator	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-evangelicalism, neo-orthodoxy, and Pentecostalism: God is subordinate to law, to nature, to man; changing, in process; irrational or supra-rational
Sin and its consequences	Violation of God's law, judicial death sentence	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-evangelicalism, neo-orthodoxy, and Pentecostalism: violation of natural law, moral sickness, psychological disorder
Justification	Christ's work <i>for</i> us: Christ's incarnation, lifelong obedience, and substitutionary atonement; imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness to sinners through belief of the truth; justification is historical, objective, forensic	Neo-evangelicalism and Pentecostalism: Spirit's work in us, new birth, being born again. Romanism: infusion of Christ's righteousness, development of man's own righteousness. Modernism, neo-orthodoxy, and liberalism: self-help, psychoanalysis. Justification is experiential, subjective, moral, psychological
Sanctification	Communication of Christ's truth leading to righteousness; change of ideas and attitudes, transforming of the mind, resulting in change of behavior	Romanism: good works, rites, rituals, religious observances, perfectionism; Arminianism: second blessing, entire sanctification; Pentecostalism: Holy Spirit baptism, tongues, laughter, victorious Spirit-filled

		life; Modernism, liberalism, neo-orthodoxy: good works, good encounters
Regeneration (new birth)	Caused by God, inexperienced by believer; logically precedes belief	Romanism, neo-evangelicalism, Pentecostalism: caused by believer, who first believes and then is regenerated. Logically follows belief. Neo-orthodoxy: encounter with Christ; Modernism, liberalism: psychological wholeness
Adoption of believing sinner as God's child	Legal transaction	Romanism: All men are naturally sons of God, and members of the same spiritual family. Neo-evangelicalism: moral adoption. Liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy: adoption is moral, psychological, or unnecessary, as all men are naturally God's children
Sinfulness of man	Total depravity	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy n. o-evangelicalism, and Pentecostalism: partial depravity, goodness
Salvation	God's initiative, God's election, God's decree, God's irresistible call, Christ's efficacious atonement	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy and neo-evangelicalism: man's initiative, man's decision, man's free will; no salvation necessary, man is good, man just needs a good example
Christ	Both God and man, legal representative of his people	Romanism and neo-evangelicalism: God in a body; liberalism, modernism, and neo-orthodoxy: mere man, good moral example
Worship	Glory to God, truth to man, intellectual and intelligible	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy, and neo-evangelicalism: aesthetic experience, religious experience, entertainment, sharing

		Neither intellectual nor intelligible
Gospel	The objective, historical work of Christ <i>for</i> his people: his perfect life, sinless death, and resurrection	Liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy, neo-evangelicalism: what God is doing (or has done) <i>in</i> my life. Romanism: what God has done in the saints and church.
Faith	Understanding of Biblical truths and assent to them	Romanism: assent to teaching of the Church; liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy neo-evangelicalism: belief plus trust plus action; object of belief relatively unimportant; the act of believing is important
Ethics	God's law revealed in Scripture	Romanism: natural law, church directives; neo-evangelicalism, liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy: fleeces, feelings, intuitions, prayer, peace.

## **Mars Hill Revisited**



# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Email: [jrob1517@aol.com](mailto:jrob1517@aol.com)

Website: [www.trinityfoundation.org](http://www.trinityfoundation.org)

Telephone: 423.743.0199

Fax: 423.743.2005

## The Sin of Signing Ecumenical Declarations John W. Robbins

Today's email brought an invitation from the Acton Institute of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to sign the "Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship." This Declaration is the latest in a long series of ecumenical religious manifestoes issued in the twentieth century. It used to be that only those who considered themselves liberals issued ecumenical pronouncements, but now those who profess to be theological conservatives—such as the signers of Evangelicals and Catholics Together—are issuing ecumenical Declarations as well.<sup>1</sup> The emailman for the Acton Institute, a Roman Catholic organization<sup>2</sup> located in the heartland of the Christian Reformed Church and funded in large part by nominal Protestants, explained the intention behind the Cornwall Declaration:

Our aim is to launch a nationwide publicity campaign near Earth Day in hope of igniting a grass-roots movement for more responsible environmental stewardship than what dominates the environmentalist movement. Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant leaders will develop, as supplements to this Declaration, their own monographs on environmental stewardship in which their own theological commitments will be explicit. This enables each community to stand to its own theological positions and not be implicated by cobelligerency in the theological commitments of others. After the start of the publicity campaign, we expect to produce articles in the religious press and op-ed pieces to help spread the message. Right now we are looking for endorsements of the Declaration from scholars like yourself. Below is a list of current signers of the Declaration. If after reading the

Declaration you find yourself in agreement, please sign the endorsement form that follows it and send it to the Acton Institute....

Four lists of signers follow: 13 "Jewish Signers"; 21 "Roman Catholic Signers"; 48 "Protestant Signers"; and 16 "Other Signers (religious or otherwise)."<sup>3</sup>

What is remarkable about the Cornwall Declaration is not merely the appearance of such a varied assortment of religious officials, but the language used in the invitation to sign: "This [the publication of additional monographs] enables each [religious] community to stand to its own

<sup>1</sup> The principals of Evangelicals and Catholics Together, Roman priest Richard John Neuhaus and Southern Baptist Charles Colson, are also signers of the Cornwall Declaration.

<sup>2</sup> The Acton Institute for Religion and Liberty is not only named for a Roman Catholic, but it was founded and is headed by, not a Roman Catholic layman, but a Roman priest, Robert Sirico, a member of the Paulist order; and the Institute promotes the "economic personalism" of John Paul II. Ironically, its views are opposed to the views of Lord Acton, a nineteenth-century layman who was a bold critic of the Roman Church-State and its pretensions to power and infallibility.

<sup>3</sup> The complete list of signers as of February 28, 2000, includes: JEWISH SIGNERS: Rabbi Daniel Lapin, Rabbi David Novak, Dr. Malcolm J. Sherman, Rabbi Clifford E. Librach, Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Fradkin, Rabbi Samuel B. Press, Rabbi Jonathan Ginsburg, Rabbi Dennis Prager, Rabbi Jacob Neusner, Dr. Herbert I. London, Dr. Kenneth R. Weinstein, Rabbi Ron Aigen, Mr. David N. Friedman; ROMAN CATHOLIC SIGNERS: Father Richard John Neuhaus, The Rev. Paul Hartmann, Father Robert A. Sirico, Father Kevin S. Barrett, Father Frank A. Pavone, Dr. Todd Flanders, Father J. Michael Beers, Dr. Charles Baird, Dr. Alejandro A. Chafuen, Dr. Robert Royal, Dr. Margaret Maxey, Dr. Gregory Gronbacher, Dr. Eduardo J. Echeverria, Mr. Michel Therrien, Mr. Michael B. Barkey, Dr. Kevin E. Schmiesing, Dr. Russell Hittinger, Prof. Leonard P. Liggio, Rev. Dr. Alexander A. Di Lella, Mr. Samuel Casey Carter, Mr. Paul V. Harberger, PROTESTANT SIGNERS: Mr. E. Calvin Beisner, Ms. Diane Knippers, Dr. P. J. Hill, Rev. Dr. D. James Kennedy, Mr. Michael Cromartie, Mr. Doug Bandow, Mr. David Rothbard, The Rev. Dr. H. Lee Cheek, J. Render Caines, David W. Hall, Dr. Marvin Olasky, Dr. Ronald Nash, Mr. Stephen Grabill, Mr. Paul Mastin, Dr. Richard Stroup, Dr. Kenneth Chilton, Dr. Thomas Sieger Derr, Prof. Alan Gomes, Dr. George Grant, Dr. Amy Sherman, Rev. Edmund Opitz, Mr. David Noebel, Dr. Paul Cleveland, Dr. Robert G. Lee, Rev. Richard Cizik, Dr. Don Racheter, Ms. Juliana Thompson, Dr. Charles W. Colson, The Very Rev. Stephen H. Bancroft, Mr. Howard A. Ball, Rev. Donald E. Wildmon, Dr. Timothy Terrell, Dr. J. Franklin Sexton, Dr. Jay Grimstead, Dr. Philip C. Bom, Dr. Mark Y. Herring, Dr. Jo Ann Kwong, Dr. Alan Snyder, Dr. Gary Quinlivan, Mr. Tom Minnery, Dr. James Dobson, The Venerable Norman Aldred, Dr. William R. Bright, Dr. Bruce L. Edwards, Dr. Stephen Cox, Dr. Jeffrey L. Myers, Mr. David Ridenour, Mr. William H. Lash, II; OTHER SIGNERS (religious or otherwise): Mr. Paul Weyrich, Dr. Daniel Klein, Dr. George P. Khushf, Dr. John Bennett, Dr. D. Eric Schansberg, Ms. Floy Lilley, Dr. Peter Huber, Mr. John McConnell, Dr. Charles W. Rovey, Mr. Paul Driessen, Mr. Jerry Bowyer, Mr. William T. Devlin, Ms. Laurie Morrow, Dr. Jane M. Orient, Dr. Henry I. Miller, Mr. Len Munsil.

theological positions and not be implicated by cobelligerency in the theological commitments of the others.”

This statement demonstrates the concern of the authors that the signers of the Cornwall Declaration would be “implicated by cobelligerency” in the theological views of other signers. Additional publications are needed in order to attempt to avoid such implication, for each signer is indeed implicated by the Cornwall Declaration in the theological views of others. The only way to avoid implication would be to argue that there is no meeting of the minds at all, which would defeat the purpose of the Declaration. The whole point of the Declaration is to implicate—to closely connect—Judaism, Romanism, Protestantism, and Otherism on these issues. Additional publications may discuss differences between the religious groups, but the Cornwall Declaration itself implicates (“closely connects”) the signers and their religions.

The Declaration declares the signers’ “shared reverence for God and His creation” (a statement that seems to suggest the signers revere the creature as well as the Creator); and it describes itself as “this declaration of our common concerns, beliefs, and aspirations.” The Declaration mentions “Our position [singular], informed by revelation and confirmed by reason and experience”; “Our common Judeo-Christian heritage”; and it makes several references to theology. The section titled “Our Beliefs” is seven paragraphs long, and it states “theological and anthropological principles” on which the signers agree. Either these statements are true, or they are disingenuously deceptive.

The signers have not signed as individuals (that would be bad enough); they have signed as members (and officials) of religious groups: Rabbis, Priests, Elders; Jews, Romanists (erroneously called Catholics), Protestants (though they seem not to be protesting Romanism any more), and Others. The Cornwall Declaration is a religious document signed by religious officials. By signing this Declaration, and others like it, Christians sin in several ways:

1. They “share [are implicated] in other people’s sins.”
2. They disclose that making a joint political statement is more important to them than proclaiming the whole counsel of God.
3. They violate the scores of commands in Scripture to “be separate”; to avoid “unequal yokes with unbelievers”; to be “sanctified”; to be “called out”; to have nothing to do with those who profess to be Christians but are not.
4. They speak useless words.
5. They use words that cannot communicate clear meaning.
6. They teach that the Christian worldview is not unique but shares common ground with the worldviews of Romanism, Judaism, and Otherism.

Let us examine these public sins—these scandals.

## **Scandal Number 1**

### **Real Guilt by Religious Collaboration: “Sharing in Other People’s Sins”**

The Bible issues a stern warning to church officers (and to all Christians by presupposition) not to share in other people’s sins: “Do not lay hands on [ordain] anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure” (*1 Timothy* 5:22). Sharing in others’ sins is a sin of impurity that is always to be avoided. Declarations that are acceptable to and endorsed by unbelievers as well as believers are either so vague as to be virtually meaningless—the useless, idle words that Christ warned against—or so un-Christian that unbelievers can endorse them. Any religious Declaration that contained the Gospel—or even clear definitions of terms such as “God” and “revelation”—could not be sincerely and intelligently signed by an unbeliever. The Cornwall Declaration avoids both the Gospel and clear definitions in order to persuade unbelievers to sign.

## **Scandal Number 2**

### **Inversion of Christian Priorities: Political Proclamations Are More Important than Proclaiming the Gospel**

By issuing joint religious Declarations on political issues with unbelievers, Christians show that they esteem making ecumenical political statements more important than proclaiming the Gospel to those unbelievers. By their action they show that the views that unite them are more important than the Gospel that divides them. Rather than speaking face-to-face to those unbelievers about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Christians who signed the Cornwall Declaration stand shoulder-to-shoulder with unbelievers to issue joint religious statements on political matters. Issuing ecumenical manifestoes is a subtle way of disobeying the Great Commission while posturing as spokesmen for Christianity.

This inversion of Christian priorities has been a persistent and prevalent error of the twentieth century, espoused first by liberals and modernists, and now by conservatives. By adopting liberal tactics, conservatives convey a liberal message, no matter what they say.

Can the reader imagine the Apostle Paul signing a joint religious Declaration with Jews, Judaizers—who apparently believed the “fundamentals of the faith” (but not justification by faith alone; for teaching that unbelief Paul damned them)—and dissident Pagans against the policies of the Roman Empire? Can the reader imagine Jesus issuing a joint religious Declaration—the “Jerusalem Declaration on Imperial Stewardship”—with the Sanhedrin, condemning the oppressive policies of Caesar? If the reader can imagine that, it shows only how far the reader is from the mind of Paul and Christ, who determined not to know anything among us but Christ crucified, to speak only the words of divine wisdom, not of human foolishness, and to be friends of God, not friends of the world: “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be



a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (*James* 4:4). Signing ecumenical Declarations for political purposes demonstrates that Christians do not know or do not accept the priorities of Jesus and Paul.

Furthermore, the Cornwall Declaration discloses a misunderstanding of the theological foundation of Western civilization, which emerged only from the preaching of the Gospel, not from the doctrines of other religions, and certainly not from the tyranny and foolishness of the Roman Church-State. The Cornwall Declaration obscures the role of the Reformation in the development of Western civilization, not only by not mentioning it, but also by using misleading language such as “The past millennium brought unprecedented improvements in human health, nutrition, and life expectancy...” It was not “the past millennium” that brought these improvements, but the past 500 years,<sup>4</sup> during which God has blessed the bold proclamation and belief of his Word. That Word had been suppressed for a millennium by the Roman Church-State. The Cornwall Declaration ignores and thus obscures the indispensable role of the Reformation in the development of Western civilization, apparently because to tell the truth might offend some prospective signers.

### **Scandal Number 3**

#### **Compromise with the World: Accepting Human Foolishness as Wisdom**

When God gave the Israelites the Promised Land, he forbade them to compromise with the inhabitants of Canaan. God instituted many laws to impress upon the Israelites the absolute necessity of their being separate, sanctified, and holy: They were not to intermarry, nor to adopt the customs of the Canaanite people, nor to eat their food, nor to worship their gods. They were not to wear garments of mixed fabrics nor to plant crops of mixed seed. All these laws were designed to impress upon the Israelites the absolute necessity of remaining separate, pure, unspotted, and uncompromised. The ancient Israelites did not learn the lesson, and they were destroyed; neither have many professed Christians of the twentieth century.

By entangling themselves in such Declarations, Christians hope to gain something—media attention, fame, influence, respectability, the honor of the world, power—but they endanger their own souls and the souls of others. The invitation to sign the Cornwall Declaration reports that

Our aim is to launch a nationwide publicity campaign...in hopes of igniting a grass-roots movement.... After the start of the publicity campaign, we expect to produce articles in the religious press and op-ed pieces to help spread the message.

Christians who have signed this ecumenical Declaration have made a fool’s bargain. In order to gain publicity, they

<sup>4</sup> The effect of the words “the past millennium” is to credit the Roman Church-State with these improvements and to obscure the role of the Reformation.

have compromised the Word of God. Orange juice gains nothing by being mixed with strychnine, but poison mixed with orange juice gains more victims. Christians gain nothing by issuing joint religious Declarations with unbelievers, but unbelievers and unbelief gain much by the confusion such pronouncements engender in people’s minds. Truth gains nothing by being mixed with falsehood, but falsehood gains much by being mixed with truth: It can deceive more people more effectively. The honest man gains nothing by collaborating with the shady character, but the shady character gains much by collaborating with the honest man: He obtains credit and an undeserved reputation for honesty. Only falsehood, unbelief, and dishonesty can gain from such collaboration—from such ecumenical Declarations. That may be one reason so many unbelievers are willing to sign these Declarations: They understand better than Christians do exactly who gains and who loses from such alliances. “For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light” (*Luke* 16:8).

### **Scandal Number 4**

#### **Fatal Locution: “Idle Words”**

Christ made several statements about the importance of words. His teaching directly contradicts the common contemporary notion that words are relatively unimportant; that only actions and deeds matter. His teaching also contradicts the premise upon which ecumenical manifestoes such as the Cornwall Declaration rest, that unbelievers are able sincerely and intelligently to say good words. For example, Christ said:

Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle [useless] word men may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (*Matthew* 12:34-37).

The Cornwall Declaration assumes and teaches that those whom Christ called evil can sincerely and intelligently say good things.

### **Scandal Number 5**

#### **Garbling God’s Word: “An Uncertain Sound”**

The Apostle Paul, a model for Christians, repeatedly prayed that he would proclaim the Gospel boldly as he ought: “that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (*Ephesians* 6:18-20).

Paul and other Biblical writers also emphasized the importance of clarity:

But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air (*1 Corinthians* 14: 6-9).

Paul's fear was not that words spoken by Christians might be hard to hear, but that they would be impossible to understand because they have no univocal meaning or definite significance. Paul condemned words that are not definite and clear. Even things without life must make distinctive and definite sounds; otherwise no one can understand their significance. If harps, pipes, and trumpets must speak clearly, how much more so Christians? Hearers will not understand their meaning if their words are equivocal, vague, ambiguous, and indefinite. They will understand only if their words are univocal, clear, unambiguous, and definite.

Ecumenical manifestoes such as the Cornwall Declaration are not clear and unambiguous; they not only omit essential ideas and include misleading ideas, but they also deliberately use words in an equivocal fashion so that persons of various religions can sign them. This equivocation is not a minor feature of the Cornwall Declaration; the Declaration depends on using important terms ambiguously and indefinitely. Take, for example, the phrase "shared reverence for God." Not only is the term "God" used equivocally so that Protestants, Romanists, Jews, and Others, each with a different definition of the term "God," may sign the Declaration, but the impact of the document turns on these fundamental equivocations. If a reader object that the various religions' definitions of the term "God" are not different, then the reader has missed the lessons of Scripture: The Apostle Paul disposed of the natural theology of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas (that is, the Roman Catholic conception of God): "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God..." (*1 Corinthians* 1:21). Jesus himself disposed of both the Greek and the Judaic conceptions of God in these words: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son and he to whom the Son wills to reveal him" (*Matthew* 11:27). Furthermore, since Jews reject the Trinity, their god is obviously a different god. And who knows what definitions of the term "god" flit about the brains of those who classify themselves as "Other"?

Not to belabor the point, but what on Earth can the Cornwall Declaration mean by its appeal to "revelation"? Is this personal or propositional revelation? Is it the 66 books of the Bible, or the 73 books and additional scattered fragments of the Roman Church-State? Does it include infallible encyclicals, or is it merely the Old Testament? And what does that group that calls itself "Other" think the term "revelation" means? The *Koran*? The *Book of Mormon*? Martin Luther King's *Letter from a Birmingham*

*Jail*? The Cornwall Declaration is a tissue of equivocations.

## Scandal Number 6 Adulterating the Word of God: Syncretism

All these scandals culminate in the last and most serious scandal: syncretism.

If it is appropriate for Christians to take public positions on economic and political issues—and it is—then they are required by God to do so as Christians, not as builders of an ecumenical Tower of Babel. The real and effective message delivered by ecumenical pronouncements such as the Cornwall Declaration—the message delivered irrespective of what the Declaration itself says—is that Christianity has nothing uniquely true or important to say to the world on these matters, that Christian ideas are interchangeable and fungible with the ideas of Judaism, Romanism, and Otherism. By making joint religious Declarations with unbelievers, Christians implicitly deny the uniqueness of Biblical, propositional revelation; they implicitly assert, contrary to Scripture, that men's foolishness is as good as divine wisdom; they unavoidably teach that Christianity shares important ideas and principles with unbelieving systems of thought. Christians who sign such statements fail to realize that Christianity does not have a single proposition in common with systems of unbelieving thought. That is the philosophical lesson that must be drawn from the many Biblical statements and injunctions about purity, separation, sanctification, and holiness. Those terms do not apply, in some pietistic fashion, merely to one's behavior; they apply even more strictly to one's ideas and thoughts. Ideas are not neutral, nor are they common to various systems of thought. Ideas are to be "taken captive to the obedience of Christ":

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ... (*2 Corinthians* 10:3-5).

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind... (*Romans* 12:2).

Some Christians obviously think they gain something by signing such ecumenical Declarations: In this case, they hope to gain publicity. But what exactly is being publicized? It is not Christianity; it is not even Christian economics. What is being publicized is a religious document that says that whether one thinks as a Jew, a Romanist, a Protestant, or an Other really does not matter: Jews, Romanists, Protestants, and Others all agree on these principles. They share common ground. These important matters are not the exclusive domain of Christ Jesus; they are Everyman's Land. Christians may have something distinctive to say on secondary matters, but on these fundamental "theological and anthropological principles," to use the language of the Cornwall Declaration, Christianity and Judaism, Christianity and

Romanism, Christianity and Otherism speak with one voice.

This is the language of unbelief.

Those Christians who have signed the Cornwall Declaration have obscured the clear message of Gospel, compromised the Christian worldview, and opposed the advance of the Kingdom of God.

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

*March, April, May 1998*

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Email: [Jrob1517@aol.com](mailto:Jrob1517@aol.com)

Website: [www.trinityfoundation.org](http://www.trinityfoundation.org)

Telephone: 423.743.0199

Fax: 423.743.2005

## Healing the Mortal Wound

John W. Robbins

Several years ago, about the time Charles Colson, Chairman of Prison Fellowship, and Richard John Neuhaus, President of the Institute on Religion and Public Life, quietly began their movement to overthrow the Reformation, *The Trinity Review* published an analysis of Colson's theology titled "The Counterfeit Gospel of Charles Colson" (January and February 1994). The ersatz-evangelicals were stung by our criticism of their celebrated leader, whom they had nicknamed "the thinking man's Billy Graham," and they reacted maliciously.

The 1994 essay was not the first time *The Trinity Review* had criticized Charles Colson's false gospel and in turn been attacked by the ersatz-evangelicals for doing so: In 1985 *The Trinity Review* had published a long and (now it seems) overly polite letter that Dr. Robbins had written to Colson about his theological errors, a letter that Colson did not deign to acknowledge. At the time, Dr. Robbins was teaching at Chesapeake Theological Seminary in the Washington, D. C., area, but after that letter was published, the Seminary vice president, in an unusual act of kindness, invited Dr. Robbins out for pizza, and there at the Pizza Hut in suburban Maryland, told him to stop criticizing Colson or he would no longer be teaching at the Seminary. The vice president, like so many seminary officials, was not interested in truth or theology; he was interested in prestige and money, and Charles Colson represented both. Of course, Chesapeake Seminary executed his threat, and Dr. Robbins was never

invited back to teach. In 1994, Dr. Robbins' essay on Colson's errant theology would cost him a teaching position at The King's College in New York. In 1996, Bill Bright had his lawyers write letters to The Trinity Foundation, threatening litigation for mentioning on the cover of *Justification by Faith Alone* that Bright was a signer of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." We can only conclude that the ersatz-evangelicals, who are continually enthusing about love, love all things—except the truth, and all men—except those who speak it.

### *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*

In 1992 or 1993, Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus organized a joint project of the organizations they had founded, Prison Fellowship (founded in 1976, it had a budget of \$38 million in 1997) and the Institute on Religion and Public Life (founded in 1989, it had a budget of \$1.6 million in 1996). This "joint project" (the words are Neuhaus') invited both Roman Catholic and Evangelical theologians to participate in drafting a document published on March 29, 1994, under the title "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" was an attack on the importance of Christian theology in general and the doctrine of justification by faith alone in particular, in favor of creating a united religious front for political and social action against

secular humanism. The Colson-Neuhaus attack on doctrine and justification was so obvious that many leading churchmen—such as D. James Kennedy, John MacArthur, and R. C. Sproul—rejected it openly. The Trinity Foundation's response to "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" was to publish two books on justification: Charles Hodge's *Justification by Faith Alone* and Horatius Bonar's *The Everlasting Righteousness*.

Despite criticism from leaders such as Kennedy, Sproul, and MacArthur, the Colson-Neuhaus Group did not dissolve; instead, they renewed their efforts, meeting twice a year, burning up the fax and telephone lines between meetings, and continued to work quietly until November 1997. On November 12, they released a new document called "The Gift of Salvation." This document, unlike "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," is entirely theological in content; it is not characterized by expressions of concern about social and political action; it is designed, not to effect a political alliance, but to create a theological, and eventually an ecclesiastical, union.

"The Gift of Salvation," according to one of its signers, Timothy George, Dean of Beeson Divinity School, "is being translated into various languages and will be distributed to pastors and church leaders around the world." In addition, "A volume of essays and papers presented at these meetings will be published in the near future." George reports that "The Gift of Salvation" is intended as a response to criticism that the 1994 manifesto slighted justification and missions (*Christianity Today*, December 8, 1997).

With "The Gift of Salvation," the active involvement, support, and guidance by the Vatican are obvious, though they have not been widely reported by the press. In a telephone interview on January 14, 1998, Mr. Neuhaus (disobeying Christ, he calls himself "Father Neuhaus") confirmed that Roman Catholic bishops had indeed attended and been involved in meetings of the Colson-Neuhaus Group, and that Cardinal Edward Cassidy had attended at least two Group meetings in 1996 and 1997, including speaking at the meeting on October 6-7 in New York City at which the latest manifesto,

"The Gift of Salvation," was adopted. The substance of the Cardinal's remarks was reprinted in the January 1998 issue of *First Things*, a journal edited by Neuhaus. In addition to Cardinal Cassidy, Dean George reported in a telephone conversation with this writer on January 22 that Archbishop Francis George of Chicago (no relation to Dean Timothy George, except, he said, as "brothers in Christ") and Cardinal John O'Connor of New York have been active participants in the Colson-Neuhaus Group. Archbishop George was recently named a Cardinal by the reigning monarch of the Roman State-Church, Karol Wojtyla, dba John Paul II. "The Gift of Salvation," published also in the January 1998 issue of *First Things*, was introduced by this statement: "The convenors [sic] and participants [in the Colson-Neuhaus Group] express their gratitude to Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, for his very active support throughout this process." Who are Francis George, John J. O'Connor, and Edward Idris Cassidy?

### *Francis George*

Named a cardinal in the Roman State-Church by Karol Wojtyla on January 18, 1998, Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago, has been a participant in the Colson-Neuhaus Group's discussions for at least two years. Born January 18, 1937, George entered the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1957, was ordained a priest in 1963, and ordained a bishop in 1990. He has been Archbishop of Chicago for less than a year, being installed in May 1997. His first stint as archbishop was in Portland, Oregon, beginning in May 1996.

Educated at the University of Ottawa, the Catholic University of America, Tulane University, and the Pontifical University Urbaniana in Rome, George holds five degrees. Much of his life has been spent in academia, having taught at five colleges and authored a score of articles, reviews and one book. His time, however, has been largely occupied with administrative duties: George currently holds positions in more than twenty Roman organizations, committees, and conferences, including that of trustee of the Papal Foundation.

## *John J. O'Connor*

John J. O'Connor was born in Philadelphia, January 15, 1920, educated in the public and parochial grade and high schools in Philadelphia, attended St. Charles Borromeo Seminary and five colleges and universities. He received an M. A. in "Advanced Ethics" from Villanova, an M. A. in Clinical Psychology from Catholic University, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from Georgetown University. O'Connor was ordained a priest in Philadelphia in 1945. For 27 years he served as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, and was Chief of Chaplains from 1975 to 1979. He retired from the Navy in 1979 with the rank of Rear Admiral. Later that year he was ordained a bishop by Karol Wojtyla in Rome. He was appointed archbishop of New York in 1984, and made a cardinal in 1985.

Cardinal O'Connor is a member of several departments of the Vatican government, including the Congregation of Bishops, the Congregation for Vatican Finance, the Council for Public Affairs of the Church, and the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications. He is also chairman of the Committee on Social Development and World Peace, a member of the Pro-Life Committee, and a member of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference Administrative Board. He is on the advisory board of the Georgetown (University) Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, the Knights of Malta, and the Knights of Columbus.

## *Edward Cassidy*

By far the most interesting, most powerful, and most important of the Roman officials participating in the Colson-Neuhaus Group is Edward Cassidy. Despite his name, he is not an American Cardinal, as one might assume. His *curriculum vitae*, provided to *The Trinity Review* by his office in the Vatican, reports that the Cardinal

was born in Sydney, Australia, July 5, 1924;

was educated at Parramatta High School in Sydney;

was an employee of the Ministry of Road Transport for the government of New South Wales for three years after high school;

entered St. Columbia's Seminary in Springwood in 1943;

was promoted to St. Patrick's College in Manly in 1944; and

was ordained to the priesthood in St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, on July 23, 1949, at the age of 25.

But the future Cardinal's days in Australia were nearly over. From 1950 to 1952, Edward Idris Cassidy served as Assistant Priest in the parish of Yenda, diocese of Wagga Wagga—where he was later incardinated. In September 1952, the bishop of Wagga Wagga sent Cassidy to Rome to study canon law at the Lateran University, which awarded him a doctorate in Canon Law *summa cum laude* for his study of the political-ecclesiastical figure of the Apostolic Delegate. While at the Lateran University, Cassidy was also a student at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy in Piazza della Minerva, from which he received a diploma in diplomatic studies in 1955. He joined the diplomatic service of the papacy in the same year.

It is important for the reader to keep in mind that the Roman organization, though very religious, is not a church; it is and has always been a religio-political organization. Vatican City is an independent and sovereign nation, and the papacy both sends and receives ambassadors from most nations in the world, including the United States. For example, the Vatican maintains an embassy in Washington, D. C.; its telephone number is 202.333.7121. President Clinton recently appointed former U. S. Representative Mrs. Lindy Boggs, a devout Romanist, as U. S. Ambassador to the Vatican. (All this implies, of course, that all members of the Roman hierarchy are agents of a foreign power, but they are apparently exempt from registering as such.) Furthermore, the papacy has maintained for at least a thousand years that it is the rightful sovereign of the world, and that all

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people—citizens and rulers alike—owe it unquestioning allegiance.

As an ambassador for the pope, Cassidy was first sent to India (1955-1962), followed by five years in Dublin (1962-1967), two years in El Salvador (1967-1969) and a year in Argentina (1969-1970). On October 27, 1970, Paul VI, the reigning monarch of the Roman government, appointed Cassidy Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to the Republic of China, conferring on him the Titular See of Amantia and making him an archbishop. Cassidy was episcopally ordained in Rome on November 15, 1970, and left for Taiwan shortly thereafter.

Since being ordained a Roman priest in 1949, Cassidy's career has included the following:

assistant priest, parish of Yenda, diocese of Wagga Wagga, Australia, 1950-1952;

student at the Lateran University, Rome, 1952-1955;

student at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy in Piazza della Minerva, 1953-1955;

Doctor of Canon Law, *summa cum laude*, Lateran University, 1955;

Diplomate in Diplomatic Studies, Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, 1955;

appointed to the diplomatic service of the papacy, 1955;

posted to the Apostolic Internunciature in India, 1955-1962;

posted to Apostolic Nunciature in Dublin, Ireland, 1962-1967;

posted to El Salvador, 1967-1969;

posted to Argentina, 1969-1970;

posted to the Republic of China (Taiwan), 1970-1979;

ordained archbishop, 1970;

first Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to Bangladesh, 1972-1979;

Apostolic Delegate to Burma, 1972-1979;

Apostolic Delegate to Southern Africa, 1979-84;

Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to Lesotho, 1979-1984;

Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to The Netherlands, 1984-1988;

Substitute of the Secretariat of State (appointed by the reigning monarch of Rome, Karol Wojtyla), 1988-;

President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (appointed by Wojtyla), 1989-;

President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, 1989.

In 1991, Karol Wojtyla made ("created" is the word the Vatican uses) Cassidy Cardinal Deacon of Santa Maria in Via Lata, and soon thereafter appointed him a member of the following Vatican divisions and departments, positions that he still holds:

the Council of the Secretariat of State's Second Section;

the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith;

the Congregation for the Bishops;

the Congregation for the Oriental Churches;

the Congregation for the Evangelisation of the Peoples;

the Congregation for Divine Worship;

the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments;

the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue;

the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*;

the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See;

the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

In 1994, Karol Wojtyla appointed Cardinal Cassidy a member of the President's Council of the newly formed Central Committee for the Jubilee Year 2000. In March 1995 Cardinal Cassidy was named a member of the General Secretariat's Council for the Special Assembly of the Bishops' Synod for Lebanon. In June 1996, Cassidy was named a member of the Pre-Synodal Council of the Synod of Bishops for the Special Assembly for Oceania.

Edward Idris Cassidy entered the diplomatic service—the intelligence service—of the papacy in 1955, at the age of 31. For 46 years he has been an ambassador of the papacy; he has occupied the highest offices of the Roman State-Church; and he has been a trusted international delegate of the pope. To say that Edward Cassidy is a powerful figure in the Vatican government is understatement. And because it is understatement, to suggest that Charles Colson and R. J. Neuhaus are the principals in Evangelicals and Catholics Together is ludicrous. When Cassidy and Neuhaus and Colson sit down at the table together, it is neither the ex-con nor the ex-Lutheran who calls the shots. According to Will Nance, Director of Wilberforce Communications at Prison Fellowship, Cardinal Cassidy has "reviewed all the work" of the Colson-Neuhaus Group and has "put his stamp of approval on the documents."

The January issue of *First Things* published the text of Cardinal Cassidy's remarks to the Colson-Neuhaus Group on October 7, 1997. For the Cardinal's lecture, the Roman bishops from Latin America, led by Archbishop Oscar Rodriguez, president of CELAM, the council of Latin American bishops conferences, joined the Colson-Neuhaus Group. Also present was Cardinal John O'Connor. The formal title of Cardinal Cassidy's lecture was "The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium"; its subtitle is "Evangelizing and Reevangelizing Latin America with—Not Against—One Another." One of the Cardinal's principal concerns in the lecture was to stop the loss of membership in the Roman State-Church in Latin America. That is also why "The Gift of Salvation" is being translated and distributed worldwide, as Timothy George reported in *Christianity Today*.

### *Charles Colson and R. J. Neuhaus*

Richard John Neuhaus is president of The Institute on Religion and Public Life, formerly known as the Rockford Institute Center on Religion and Society. Neuhaus led the Center in a noisy and acrimonious split from the Rockford Institute (Illinois) in 1989. The Institute on Religion describes itself as "a nonpartisan interreligious research and education institute in New York City." Neuhaus' *curriculum vita* describes him as "Father Neuhaus," "acclaimed as one of the foremost authorities on the role of religion in the contemporary world." Neuhaus is editor-in-chief of the Institute's publication, *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*. Neuhaus has written and edited many books, including *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, on the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg (edited, 1969); *Movement and Revolution* (with Peter Berger, 1970); *In Defense of People* (1971); *Time Toward Home: The American Experiment as Revelation* (1975); *Against the World for the World* (edited, 1976); *Virtue, Public and Private* (edited); *Freedom for Ministry; Christian Faith and Public Policy* (1977); *To Empower People* (with Peter Berger, 1977); *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America; Unsecular America* (edited, 1986); *Dispensations* (1986); *Community, Confession and Conflict* (edited); *The Catholic Moment: The Paradox of the Church in the Postmodern World* (1987); *Jews in Unsecular America* (edited); *Democracy and the Renewal of Education* (edited); *Bible, Politics and Democracy* (edited); *Believing Today: Jew and Christian in Conversation* (with Rabbi Leon Klenicki); *America Against Itself* (1992); *Doing Well and Doing Good: The Moral Challenge of the Free Economy* (1992); *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* (co-edited with Charles Colson, 1995); *The End of Democracy* (1997).

Neuhaus was born in Canada to American parents, educated in Ontario, and graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, a Lutheran institution. According to his *c.v.* and book jackets, while a Lutheran minister Neuhaus played a leading role in organizations working for civil rights, peace, international justice, and religious ecumenism. That is, Neuhaus is a liberal-leftist. He has won the John Paul II Award for Religious Freedom, which must be like winning the William



Jefferson Clinton Award for Chastity and Honesty. Neuhaus has held presidential appointments in the Carter, Reagan, and Bush administrations. For some time, Neuhaus was a columnist for *National Review*, William F. Buckley's snooty journal of opinion.

In the 1980s, Neuhaus wrote that there were no longer any important theological differences between Lutherans and Roman Catholics, and predicted that by the end of the century, Lutherans would be reunited with Rome. On September 8, 1990, Neuhaus left the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and joined the Roman State-Church. In a memo to his friends he wrote:

"On Saturday, September 8, the Nativity of Mary, I was received into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. In the months ahead I will be preparing to enter the priesthood of the Catholic Church. With the full support of my bishop, John Cardinal O'Connor, I will continue to serve as director of the Institute on Religion and Public Life and as a member of the Community of Christ. . . . Over the last twenty years and more, I have repeatedly and publicly urged that the separated ecclesial existence of Lutheranism, if it was once necessary, is no longer necessary; and, if no longer necessary, such separated existence is no longer justified. Therefore, cooperating with other evangelical catholics who shared my understanding of the Lutheran destiny and duty according to the Augsburg Confession, I devoted myself to the healing of the breach of the 16th century between Rome and the Reformation. This meant and means ecclesial reconciliation and the restoration of full communion with the Bishop of Rome and the churches in communion with the Bishop of Rome."

In September 1991, Neuhaus was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of New York. Shortly after becoming a Roman priest, Neuhaus began his collaboration with Charles Colson in Evangelicals and Catholics Together.

According to Neuhaus, the Vatican is giving "official support for an unofficial initiative [Evangelicals and Catholics Together, the Colson-Neuhaus Group]." Now such double-talk is typical of both Romanists and Communists; as George Orwell pointed out in "Politics and the English Language," double-talk is typical of all who wish to disguise their intentions or their actions. In this case, the double-talk indicates that Colson and his fellow ersatz-evangelicals are puppets of the Vatican. If one understands what role the ersatz-evangelicals are playing and what the political and ecclesiastical ambitions of the Vatican are, it is very clear what Colson and Neuhaus are doing. To put it bluntly, Colson and Neuhaus are the front men (the Romanists, as well as the Communists, are adept at using fronts) in an imperialist papal plan to regain control, first of the churches, and ultimately of the world. Anyone familiar with the bloody history of the papacy—a totalitarian politico-religious power that has been far more successful and survived far longer than the Communists or the Nazis—will know that the papacy has never relinquished its centuries-old claim to be Dominatrix of the world. Its religious liberalism since the Vatican II Council (1962-1965) has not diminished the papacy's religious and political ambitions; rather, as anyone familiar with the influence of liberalism in the so-called Protestant churches knows, it has enhanced them.

Richard John Neuhaus converted to Romanism in 1990. After all, why not do so, since the Roman State-Church is the logical end of the doctrinal and ecclesiastical trends in modern "Protestantism" in general, and modern Lutheranism in particular? The Roman State-Church, for example, has never wavered in its belief that Christ died for each and every man without exception; that is, the Roman State-Church has always been Arminian, even before there was an Arminius. Colson, being an Arminian Southern Baptist, has not yet rejoined Rome, but his wife is Roman, and one suspects that Colson himself has not actually joined the Roman State-Church only because he believes he can be more effective at repealing the Reformation if he remains a Southern Baptist for the time being.

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Of course, being a willing tool of powerful and sinister interests is not a novel experience for Charles Colson. He is one of the White House lawyers who worked for Richard Nixon in the early 1970s and went to prison for his loyal efforts. During that period Colson claims to have been converted by reading C. S. Lewis (Lewis' theology is a garbled mixture of some ideas from the Bible, more from the Anglo-Catholic Church, and many from pagans), and Colson was later tutored in theology by R. C. Sproul, among others. Clive Staples Lewis was a member of the apostate Church of England, an institution whose history is based largely on theological compromise with Rome (the Anglicans were the original middle-of-the-roaders, though if you say it in Latin, as they did, it sounds much more respectable: *via media*). And R. C. Sproul, regrettably, clings tenaciously to Aristotelian and Roman Catholic philosophy, while preaching the sovereignty of God, apparently believing that a mind divided against itself can too stand.

Like Neuhaus (see *The Catholic Moment*), Colson is enamored with religious paradox. The word *paradox*, of course, indicates the influence existentialism and dialectical theology have had on their thinking; their primary effect is to enable Colson and Neuhaus to accept contradictory ideas without quibble.

Colson, who is Southern Baptist and whose wife is Roman, has participated in Roman masses and praised Teresa of Calcutta as "the greatest saint in the world" and a "giant of the faith." His 1992 book, *The Body*, was praised by ersatz-evangelicals as well as Romanists: J. I. Packer (Anglican), Cardinal O'Connor (Romanist), Pat Robertson (Charismatic), Bill Hybels (entertainer), Steve Brown (radio star), Jerry Falwell (Baptist), James Montgomery Boice (Presbyterian), Jack Hayford (Charismatic), Carl F. H. Henry (former *Christianity Today* editor), Adrian Rogers (celebrity), Kenneth Kantzer (former *Christianity Today* editor), Richard John Neuhaus (Romanist), and Vernon Grounds (Baptist seminary president). In his list of "Recommended Reading" at the end of the book, Colson included volumes by Wolfhart Pannenberg, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Malcolm

Muggeridge, R. J. Neuhaus, Richard Niebuhr, Ern Baxter, Avery Dulles, S. J., Charles Finney, Keith Fournier, John Frame, John Paul II, Robert Webber, and Helmut Thelicke.

Colson favors making the sign of the cross; laments the lack of a Protestant Magisterium and a monolithic church structure; decries religious freedom; attacks individualism; endorses "Catholic evangelicals"; and praises the Roman State-Church for "calling heretics to account."

These two influential writers, Charles Colson and R. J. Neuhaus, together with their collaborators, the ersatz-evangelicals

Gerald Bray, Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama

Bill Bright, Founder and Chairman, Campus Crusade for Christ, California

Harold O. J. Brown, Professor, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois

William C. Frey, Bishop, Episcopal Church

Timothy George, Dean, Beeson Divinity School

Os Guinness, President, Trinity Forum, Arlington, Virginia

Kent R. Hill, President, Eastern Nazarene College, Massachusetts

Richard Land, Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Church (first signed, then withdrew his signature)

Max Lucado, author, head pastor, Oak Hills Church of Christ, San Antonio, Texas

T. M. Moore, Presbyterian Church in America; President, Chesapeake Theological Seminary, Baltimore-Washington, D.C.

Richard Mouw, President, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California

Mark Noll, Professor of History, Wheaton College, Illinois

Brian O'Connell, Interdev

Thomas Oden, President, Drew University, New Jersey

James I. Packer, Professor, Regent College, Vancouver, Canada

Timothy R. Phillips, Professor, Wheaton College

John Rogers, Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry

Robert A. Seiple, President, World Vision, Monrovia, California

John Woodbridge, Professor, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Illinois

and the Roman Catholics:

James J. Buckley, Professor, Loyola College, Maryland

J. A. Di Noia, O. P., Professor, Dominican House of Studies

Avery Dulles, S. J., Professor, Fordham University, New York

Thomas Guarino, Professor, Seton Hall University

Peter Kreeft, Professor, Boston College

Matthew L. Lamb, Professor, Boston College

Eugene LaVerdiere, S. S. S., Editor: *Emmanuel*

Francis Martin, member of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family

Ralph Martin, President, Renewal Ministries

Michael Novak, Fellow, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D. C.

Edward Oakes, S. J., Professor, Regis University, Denver, Colorado

Thomas Rausch, S. J., Professor, Loyola Marymount University

George Weigel, President, Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, D. C.

Robert Louis Wilken, Professor, University of Virginia

issued a new manifesto on November 12, 1997, "The Gift of Salvation." Let us examine that document in some detail.

### *The Document: "The Gift of Salvation"*

The 1997 manifesto from the Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group begins by quoting *John* 3:16-17, a passage, it is safe to say, that no signatory understands, for they quote it to support their Arminian-Universalist view that Christ died for every man. They do not understand even the rudiments of the Gospel: Christ died for his people, his friends, his sheep, his church, his elect; and that Christ's death actually and completely achieved their salvation. Christ's death did not merely make salvation possible, as the ersatz-evangelicals teach; *Christ's death actually saved his people*. That is what the good news—the Gospel—is.

Then the Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group thanks God "that in recent years many Evangelicals and Catholics . . ." Now, deceptive use of language pervades this document, beginning with the first sentence. "Evangelical" was the name given to the early Reformers, because they advocated two doctrines: (1) justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on the basis of Christ's finished work alone (*sola gratia/sola fide/solo Christo*); and (2) the Bible alone is the Word of God (*sola Scriptura*). But our modern Protestant-impersonators do not believe either doctrine. Calling themselves Evangelicals, they accept other words as God's Word; they reject doctrinal and historical sections of the Bible as culturally conditioned, as poetry, and as historically and scientifically inaccurate; they do not even understand, let alone believe, the system of truth taught in the Bible; they add other revelations to the Bible; and they reject the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. The Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group may speak with their lips some of the same words as the Reformers—Karl Barth and the neo-orthodox did that for decades—but their hearts are far from the Reformation, and they assign

new meanings to those words—in order to fool the elect, if possible. Second, "catholic" means universal. The Roman State-Church is not universal (though it intends to be), and its common name, "Roman Catholic Church," is a contradiction in terms, just as much as if someone were to speak of the Unicoi Universal Church. The true church is not Roman, and the Roman State-Church is neither catholic nor true.

The sentence continues: "We give thanks to God that in recent years many Evangelicals and Catholics, ourselves among them, have been able to express a common faith in Christ and so to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters in Christ." These signers, then, despite whatever differences they may have over secondary issues—which they themselves list as

the meaning of baptismal regeneration;

the Eucharist and sacramental grace;

the historic uses of the language of justification as it relates to imputed and transformative righteousness;

the normative status of justification in relation to all Christian doctrine; the assertion that while justification is by faith alone, the faith that receives salvation is never alone;

diverse understandings of merit, reward, purgatory, and indulgences; Marian devotion and the assistance of the saints in the life of salvation; and the possibility of salvation for those who have not been evangelized—

these signers assert that despite possible differences over these issues, they have a "common faith" and are "brothers and sisters in Christ." All these other matters, we must conclude, are of secondary importance.

Now, it is possible to frame a statement so vague and general that anyone with few scruples and less intelligence can subscribe to it. Some silly apologist (I will not use any names) might argue that pantheists like Spinoza and Hegel, limited monotheists like Plato, semi-Aristotelians like Thomas Aquinas, materialists like Hobbes, and

aristocratic pagans like Aristotle all agree that God exists. But our foolish apologist has confused a verbal agreement with a meeting of the minds. Such apparent agreements are possible, so long as one does not define the term "god." Once the word "god" is defined, it can easily be seen that Aristotle and Moses, for example, do not believe in the same God.

To some extent, merely verbal agreement seems to be what characterizes "The Gift of Salvation." The signers have defined neither "salvation," nor "gift," nor "justification" with any precision, and they have deliberately avoided deciding such questions as merit, baptismal regeneration, the assistance of the "saints" and Mary, purgatory, the sacraments, and indulgences. They have engaged in a great deal of deliberate ambiguity, believing that they are "brothers and sisters in Christ" and share a "common faith" without defining those terms.

Beginning by quoting Scripture, the Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group next offers a prayer of thanks to God for his ecumenical blessings; and then, third, the Group confesses a faith: "We confess together one God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; we confess Jesus Christ the Incarnate Son of God [so far the Group's confession has not progressed beyond the theology confessed by the demons quoted in the New Testament]; we affirm the binding authority of Holy Scripture . . .," and here we must pause. Notice that "binding authority" means much less than it seems to. It does not mean "infallibility" or "inerrancy"; it does not mean ultimate authority; it does not mean exclusive authority; it does not state on whom Scripture is binding; nor does it state what Scripture is. To take merely the last issue: Charles Colson, if he is a Christian—and his religious activities make it more and more doubtful—must believe that the Apocrypha is not a part of Holy Scripture. And Richard John Neuhaus, if he is a Roman Catholic, must believe that it is. Certainly Cardinals O'Connor, George, and Cassidy believe there are 73, not 66, books in Holy Scripture. So expressing agreement on the "binding authority of Holy Scripture," without defining what "Scripture" is, nor what "binding authority" is, is meaningless. A Muslim or a Mormon could have signed the

statement about Scripture. It is a ploy intended to deceive the naive, and it has largely succeeded. There has been virtually no vocal opposition to "The Gift of Salvation."

To continue with the Cassidy Group's confession: "we acknowledge the Apostles' and Nicene creeds as faithful witnesses to that Word," a clause that ensures church tradition is part of the Group's confession. Does the Group also wish to say that Jesus went to Hell, as the misleadingly named Apostles' Creed asserts?

After quoting Scripture, offering prayer, and voicing confession, the Group violates the Third Commandment by attributing to the Holy Spirit the Group's own statement: "the Holy Spirit, who calls and empowers us to confess together. . . ." Charismatics and Pentecostals violate the Third Commandment daily by falsely claiming that God told them this or that; here the Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group commits a similar sin by attributing its confession to the Holy Spirit. Kent Hill, President of Eastern Nazarene College and one of the document's signers, is quoted in *Christianity Today* (January 12, 1998), "I want to be careful not to overstate my belief that God has been involved in this process, but in some of the meetings we had a clear sense that someone else was seated at the table." Perhaps that someone else was not God, Mr. Hill; perhaps it was the pope; perhaps it was Screwtape.

In the next few sentences, tradition once again appears: "Through prayer and study of Holy Scripture [*Maccabees* or *Bel and the Dragon*, perhaps?], and aided by the Church's reflection on the sacred text from earliest times . . ." Again, of course, "Church" is not defined, nor is "original sin" in the next paragraph.

In paragraph 4, the Group unequivocally asserts its universalist position on salvation, and they do it by cleverly misquoting Scripture: "God the Creator is also God the Redeemer, offering salvation to the world. 'God desires all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.' (*1 Timothy* 2:4)." If one reads the context of the quotation, it is clear that Paul wrote that God desires the salvation of all his

people, the sheep of his pasture, not of the goats, who are condemned to everlasting punishment. If God desires the salvation of all men without exception, as the Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group asserts, then his desires are clearly frustrated, and he is not God. In fact, Roman/Arminian theology requires us to say that Hell is populated with people whom God loves. The Arminian-Universalist view contradicts both the love and the sovereignty of God, and removes all grounds of confidence in God.

## *Justification*

After two unexceptional paragraphs (5 and 6), paragraph 7 takes up the issue of justification. Reading this paragraph may surprise some members of non-Catholic churches who are not readers of *The Trinity Review* and who have heard that the Roman State-Church teaches salvation by works. The Roman State-Church's theology is more subtle—although many Roman Catholic laymen believe in salvation by works, for that is the way the Roman doctrine of justification actually works out in practice.

After acknowledging that justification has been much debated by "Protestants and Catholics" (this is the only occurrence of the word "Protestant" in the document; the signers call themselves "Evangelicals," not Protestants, for they are not protesting any doctrine of Rome), the Group writes: "We agree that justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God's gift, conferred through the Father's sheer graciousness, out of the love that he bears to us in his Son, who suffered on our behalf and rose from the dead for our justification. . . . In justification, God, on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone, declares us to be no longer his rebellious enemies but his forgiven friends, and by virtue of his declaration it is so."

Now, Christ was not raised "for" our justification; he was raised because God the Father accepted the death of that sinless man as a substitute for the deaths of his sinful people. The English word "for" has several meanings, and the Group has chosen a common and incorrect meaning for this passage. Christ's resurrection is not the cause of our

justification; his death is the cause of our justification. His resurrection, by indicating that the justice of God has been satisfied, guarantees the later resurrection of his people. (The reader may wish to consult Horatius Bonar, *The Everlasting Righteousness*, on this point.)

But there is a far more serious error in this statement, and it appears in the last clause: "and by virtue of his [God's] declaration it is so," that is, in justification, we are not merely *declared* righteous, we are actually *made* righteous. The gift of justification, it turns out, is an inherent righteousness. Although it comes out of God's grace and love, and on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone, the gift of salvation is not the legal imputation of Christ's righteousness to his people, but the infusion of Christ's righteousness into his people. In this way—a very clever and subtle way—the Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group reject the Christian doctrine of justification and the gift of salvation.

The Reformation debate over justification centered on the question of whether justification is a forensic act (a legal act) or a moral act of God; that is, is justification objective or subjective; is it outside the believer, or inside the believer? Does justification—as a legal and judicial declaration of "Not Guilty"—rest on any virtue or merit in the sinner, either before or after conversion, or does it rest wholly on the perfect life and death of the sinner's substitute and legal representative, Jesus Christ? Does justification change the legal status of the believer before the law and justice of God, or does it change the believer's heart? The Reformers said that justification is a legal and objective, not a moral and subjective, act; that it is God's pardon and forgiveness, and God's legal imputation—not moral infusion—of Christ's righteousness to the believer, and the legal imputation—not infusion—of the believer's sin to Christ that saves a believer. In this legal transaction, faith is merely the instrument God uses to accomplish justification; it is the only means by which this legal transaction can be accomplished. The sinner is not made righteous by justification, any more than Christ was made sinful by his atonement. The heart of the sinner remains sinful, even though he is regenerate, and because it

is sinful his righteousness can never merit salvation. "All our righteousnesses"—Isaiah did not say unrighteousnesses—"are filthy rags."

In the nineteenth century, an Anglican churchman turned Roman Catholic, John Henry Newman, wrote *An Essay on Justification* in which he put forth what seems to have been a novel view. Newman understood the Reformers' position, and rejected it; he was looking for the middle way—the *via media*—between Rome and Protestantism. He hit upon an idea and an analogy that has been eagerly embraced ever since by ecumenicists of all denominations, whether Roman or non-Roman. Newman argued—just as "The Gift of Salvation" asserts—that if God said something, it must be so. He and his twentieth-century disciples gave the example of God's speaking in Genesis: "Let there be light." God's command made it so. Likewise, they asserted, in justification, when God says, "Let this man be righteous," he actually becomes righteous. Justification, Newman asserted, is *both* objective and subjective; God issues a command, but just because he is God, the command makes a moral change in the heart of the believer. And all of this, according to Newman, is justification. Newman—as cleverly and subtly as anyone in the history of Anglican or Roman theology—had thought of a way to overthrow the Protestant doctrine of justification. The issue is not whether justification is an external or an internal act; according to Newman, it is both. For his efforts at subverting the truth, Newman was later made a cardinal in the Roman State-Church.

In this century, prominent theologians such as the Roman Catholic Hans Kung and the neo-orthodox Karl Barth have both adopted Newman's Anglo-Catholic doctrine of justification. Hans Kung, for example, wrote in his book, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection*:

God's *declaration* of justice is, as *God's* declaration of justice, at the same time and in the same act, a *making* just. . . . The term "justification" as such expresses an actual declaration of justness and not an inner renewal. Does it follow from this that God's declaration of justice does not imply an

inner renewal? On the contrary. It all comes down to this, that it is a matter of *God's* declaration of justice and not man's word: the utterance of the Lord, mighty in power. Unlike the word of man, the word of God *does* what it signifies. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. . . . The sinner's justification is exactly like this. God pronounces the verdict, "You are just." And the sinner is just, really and truly, outwardly and inwardly, wholly and completely. His sins *are* forgiven, and man is just in his heart.

Karl Barth wrote this about justification:

Certainly we have to do with a declaring righteous, but it is a declaration about man which is fulfilled and therefore effective in this event, which corresponds to actuality because it creates and therefore reveals the actuality. It is a declaring righteous which without any reserve can be called a making righteous.

Kung wrote, "There is no essential difference between the Barthian and the Catholic position." We write: There is no essential difference between the Colson-Neuhaus Group's position and the Roman position. Not only is there no essential difference between the neo-orthodox and the Roman position on justification, there is no essential difference between the Lutheran, liberal, neo-orthodox, Roman, ersatz-evangelical, Wesleyan, Arminian, holiness (re-read and note the perfectionism of Barth's and Kung's statements), charismatic, and Pentecostal positions on justification. All the modern religionists agree—against the Reformers and the Bible—that justification is a *making* righteous, a subjective, moral change in the believer.

Now, what is wrong with John Henry Newman's synthesis on justification, which has been adopted by so many pseudo-Christians in the twentieth century? It is afflicted by one small error that alone overthrows both the analogy and the Roman doctrine of justification. When God speaks his creative word in Genesis, he is giving a command;

grammarians would point out that the sentence is in the imperative mood: "Let there be light." Since God is omnipotent—since none of his desires is frustrated, since he does all his holy will, and none can stay his hand—his command achieves exactly what he intended it to achieve, and the light shines forth. (How diabolically subtle for this group to attempt to use the omnipotence of God to subvert justification. They deny God's omnipotence in the election of sinners.)

The trouble with Newman's doctrine is that creation and justification are not "exactly alike." They are not even similar. When God justifies a person, he does not say, "Let this man be righteous"; he does not speak in the imperative mood; he does not give a command to anyone or anything. In justification, God *declares* the righteousness of the sinner on the basis of the substitution of his only legal representative, Jesus Christ; God speaks in the indicative mood; he speaks in declarative, not imperative, sentences; and consequently, justification does *not* involve any actual moral change in the believer. Justification remains purely an objective, legal act; it is not analogous to the creative words in Genesis. In justification, God the Judge, not God the Creator, declares—not commands—that his justice is already satisfied by the death of Christ for his people, that the sacrifice of Christ is enough, that he will not impute the sinner's sins to him, but to his representative, Christ, and that the sinner is pardoned completely for his sins. The sinner is not made just, to use Kung's own words, "outwardly and inwardly, wholly and completely." If words mean something, Kung was saying that he and all believers are perfect, sinless. If words mean something, "The Gift of Salvation" says the same thing: "And by virtue of this declaration, it is so."

Notice, more importantly, that this Newmanian-Kungian-Barthian-Roman theory of creative justification makes the incarnation, sinless life, substitutionary death, atonement, and resurrection of Christ—indeed much of Christian theology—unnecessary and irrelevant to justification. God makes sinners righteous merely by commanding them to be so. Justification is accomplished by the pure creative *fiat* of God, "exactly like" creation,

Kung said. Therefore, justification is not a judicial or legal or forensic act at all; it is a creative act accomplished by the pure omnipotence of God. This Christ-less doctrine of justification, were it true, would have saved Christ a lot of trouble. God need merely have spoken, as he did in Genesis, and men would be just.

Furthermore, the doctrine of creative justification, by regarding Christ as, at best, superfluous, focuses on the sinner, not on Jesus Christ. The sinner—the man—is central; the work of Christ is unnecessary. Oh, the life and death of Christ may be useful as a moral example, or as a device to evoke our pity, but because justification is creative, not judicial, Christ's work does not satisfy the justice of the Father, nor legally benefit his church. This is religious subjectivism with a vengeance.

Furthermore, even if God's declaration of justification were a command, it would not effect the moral holiness of the sinner, but his legal righteousness, for legal righteousness, not moral holiness, is what the declaration is about. To get from God's declaration of the sinner's legal righteousness to the transformation of the sinner's heart, one must in fact change the meaning of justification altogether. Newman and his disciples do so, stealthily and surreptitiously.

Now, "The Gift of Salvation" mentions Christ's righteousness as the "basis" for God's justifying act, but Christ's righteousness is really superfluous: The document says that it is by virtue of "God's declaration" that "it is so." Just like Newman, Kung, and Barth, the Cassidy Group makes Christ's active obedience, his atonement, suffering, and death, and the imputation of his righteousness to the sinner—and the sinner's sins to Christ—irrelevant to justification, which is accomplished by God's creative command.

Furthermore, the word *justification* itself has taken on a new meaning: In the mouths of the Cassidy Group, just as in the mouths of Newman, Kung, and Barth, *justification* means *making* righteous. It is the Roman doctrine of justification. That is why the Roman Cardinals and Bishops had no problem with this statement about justification. The ersatz-

evangelicals were too witless, too stupid, to understand the statement they signed. Is that too cruel? Well, it would be much crueler to say that they understood what they signed and signed it anyway. I am trying to be as charitable as possible.

If Newman's, Kung's, Barth's, Cassidy's, Colson's, and Neuhaus' doctrine of justification were correct, it would not only make sinners actually righteous, it would make Christ actually sinful, for in the same divine act in which the sinner receives the righteousness of Christ, Christ receives the sins of the sinner. The notion that justification is a moral, internal change cuts both ways: The sinner becomes morally righteous, and Christ becomes morally sinful. If justification is a moral transaction, as the Roman State-Church teaches, then Jesus Christ is a sinful man. However, if justification is a legal exchange of the righteousness of Christ for the sin of his people, then there is no theological problem—and no blasphemy. Imputation makes the sinner legally righteous, but not actually righteous; imputation makes Christ legally sinful, and so liable to punishment on behalf of those he represents, but it does not make Christ actually sinful. But if justification is an internal moral change as the Roman State-Church teaches, and if it involves Christ's work at all, then not only does the sinner become actually righteous, but Christ becomes actually sinful. That is the price one pays for errors in the doctrine of justification: blasphemy.

The doctrine of justification in "The Gift of Salvation," like the doctrine of justification in "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," is the Roman doctrine. The Roman State-Church has yielded nothing in approving this document; that is why the papal representative—Cardinal Cassidy—at the Group's meetings put his stamp of approval on it. But the Roman State-Church has gained a great deal; it has confused and persuaded many non-Catholics; and it has successfully used Charles Colson as a dupe in its plans to achieve a new Roman Empire.

In paragraph 8, on faith, "The Gift of Salvation" asserts that "the gift of justification is received through faith." Not through "faith alone," please note. That little word *alone* is what makes the



difference between Christianity and a false gospel at this point. Its absence is one more indication that the doctrine of justification espoused by the Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group is not Christian. The Roman State-Church teaches that justification is also received through baptism, penance, and other rites and sacraments of the Roman State-Church.

Furthermore, "faith is not merely intellectual assent but an act of the whole person, involving the mind, the will, and the affections, issuing in a changed life." Here, the document virtually quotes Pope John Paul's II encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* and adopts modern faculty psychology; the "whole person," we are told, is not merely a mind and will (clearly implied by the words "intellectual" and "assent"), but also affections. Apparently a whole person (the persons of the Trinity included?) has three parts—mind, will, and affections—and faith is not merely intellectual assent, but something emotional as well. The Group sees an act of the affections as essential to the idea of faith. That, of course, cannot be supported by any Scripture, and the Cassidy Group makes no attempt to do so. Indeed, it is difficult to understand what an act of the affections is, unless it is an emotional state or act, such as romantic love, lust, hatred, or envy. The last phrase, "issuing in a changed life," is also ambiguous. Is the changed life a part of the faith by which we are justified? If so, then one can see exactly why Romanist laymen—and millions of so-called Protestants—believe in salvation by works.

Incredibly, the Group follows this confused discussion of mind, will, and affections by asserting that "We understand that what we here affirm is in agreement with what the Reformation traditions have meant by justification by faith alone (*sola fide*)." If the Group were merely reporting its misunderstanding of theology, then the statement would indicate that it needs considerable instruction in Reformation theology. But, of course, the Group is not merely reporting its misunderstanding; it is asserting that its garbled faculty psychology and consequent garbled account of faith is what the Reformers taught. The statement is a blatant attempt to misrepresent the doctrine of justification through faith alone.

In paragraph 9, the Cassidy Group continues to explain its Roman doctrine of justification: "In justification we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"; that is, justification is a subjective moral change in the sinner. This is simply false. The document rejects—while brazenly claiming to accept—the Biblical and Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone—an objective, not subjective, a legal, not moral, an imputed, not infused, righteousness, the righteousness of Christ. The fact that the Cassidy Group is so brazen indicates its low opinion of theological education in American Protestantism, and its low opinion is probably still too high an estimate. The fact that the Group boldly claims to be adopting the Reformation view while actually rejecting it shows that it has little fear of contradiction in making such preposterous claims, for not one "Protestant" in a thousand understands the issues of the Reformation.

Paragraph 10, on baptism, is a model of subtlety; its main sentence can be understood in at least two different ways by those who believe in baptismal regeneration and by those who do not: "By baptism we are visibly incorporated into the community of faith and committed to a life of discipleship."

Paragraph 12 seems to depart from the Roman State-Church's teaching on assurance: "We may therefore have assured hope for the eternal life promised to us in Christ. . . . While we dare not presume upon the grace of God, the promise of God in Christ is utterly reliable. . . ." It was precisely the claim of the Reformers that the individual could be assured of salvation that was explicitly denied by the Roman State-Church at the Council of Trent. No doubt the Cassidy Group, if pressed on the issue, would distinguish between "assurance" and "assured hope," denying the former and asserting the latter, thus keeping themselves within the confines of Trent. I doubt that this issue escaped the attention of either the Jesuits in the Group or the pope's "apostolic delegate," Cardinal Cassidy.

Paragraph 14, on evangelism, after speaking of the responsibility of evangelization, concludes with this sentence: "Many are in grave peril of being eternally lost because they do not know the way to salvation." Of course, the Bible teaches that all are

already lost, condemned because Adam's sin is immediately imputed to them; but that some—God's people, his church, his sheep, his elect, his friends—will be saved by the preaching of the Gospel. No one is lost *because* he does not hear the Gospel; he is already lost. No one is saved without hearing the Gospel. "The Gift of Salvation" seems to say that people will be lost because "they do not know the way to salvation."

Paragraph 15 asserts that "We must share the fullness of God's saving truth with all, including members of our several communities. Evangelicals must speak the gospel to Catholics and Catholics to Evangelicals, always speaking the truth in love. . . ." But if neither the ersatz-evangelicals nor the Romans who signed this document know and believe the Gospel—and we have already shown that they do not—then all this sharing and speaking and group-hugging is damned nonsense.

Paragraph 16 endorses religious freedom. It consists of only two sentences: "Moreover, we defend religious freedom for all. Such freedom is grounded in the dignity of the human person created in the image of God and must be protected also in civil law." Now the Roman State-Church for centuries has been one of the most vocal and violent opponents of religious freedom in all of human history. Its bloody tradition of persecution of dissenters did not stop in the sixteenth century with the success of the Protestant Reformation; its tradition of persecution is a living tradition that continues until the present day. Furthermore, religious persecution is not an accidental feature of the Roman system. It is not something attributable merely to bad popes, any more than Communist persecution is attributable to bad dictators such as Stalin and Mao. Both Communism and Romanism entail persecution; both are totalitarian. The entire Roman system is a denial of religious freedom; it is the claim that there is only one true ecclesiastical organization, that the pope is the head of that organization and the sovereign of the world, and that all men owe him obeisance. Apparently the Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group is convinced that Americans at the end of the twentieth century neither know nor remember church history, nor do they know the claims and traditions of the Roman

State-Church for the past 1,500 years. The Cassidy Group is correct in this assessment. This statement on religious freedom is no more credible than similar statements issued by the secular totalitarians, the Communists. Perhaps the Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group, in a future manifesto, will endorse the language of the Soviet Constitution of 1936 protecting religious freedom. The Communists always wrote and spoke in favor of religious and civil liberty. This short paragraph may be of the same nature: Something to lull the reader into thinking that Rome—one of whose mottoes is *semper eadem*, always the same—has indeed changed its totalitarian spots. Rome cannot change on this issue—any more than the Communists could—without surrendering her central political and religious principles.

Paragraphs 17 and 18 list the "interrelated questions that require further and urgent exploration" during the Group's "continuing conversations." These secondary questions are listed at the beginning of this essay. The reference to "continuing conversations" indicates that the Group has not disbanded, and does not intend to disband until the wound inflicted on the beast has been healed.

The final paragraph of "The Gift of Salvation" may be the most disingenuous in the document: "As Evangelicals who thank God for the heritage of the Reformation and affirm with conviction its classic confessions. . . ." The ersatz-evangelicals who signed this document not only do not believe the "classic confessions" of the Reformation: Most, if not all of them, do not even understand those confessions.

How can I make such an accusation? The evidence is abundant: First, they signed "The Gift of Salvation." Second, the signers are employed by, represent, and have founded institutions and organizations that ignore, contradict, and deny the system of truth presented in the "classic confessions" of the Reformation—confessions such as the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the *Westminster Confession*, and the *Judgments of the Synod of Dordt*. Look at the list of institutions with which these ersatz-evangelicals are affiliated: Beeson Divinity School, Campus Crusade for Christ, the

Episcopal Church, Eastern Nazarene College, the Church of Christ, Fuller Theological Seminary, Wheaton College, Drew University, and so on. This statement—that the ersatz-evangelicals "thank God for the heritage of the Reformation and affirm with conviction its classic confessions"—is even more incredible than the Group's affirmation of religious freedom.

## *The Reaction to "The Gift of Salvation"*

According to *Christianity Today* (January 12, 1998), "Signers of the document ["The Gift of Salvation"] . . . gave assurances that 'for the first time in 450 years, evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics have publicly agreed to a common understanding of salvation.' " Colson himself has been reported as saying that if an agreement like this had been reached five centuries ago, "the Protestant-Catholic split might not have taken place" (*Christianity Today*, January 12, 1998).

The reaction to "The Gift of Salvation" from those who did not participate in the Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group indicates deep theological confusion. Roger Nicole, Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Maitland, Florida, told *Christianity Today*: "Although I might have used a slightly different expression in a few places, if I had written this text, I am so pleased with the context and the mood of this document, and especially of Timothy George's assessment, that I enthusiastically add my signature to your list [of signers]." Mr. Nicole seems oblivious to the meaning and content of the document, focusing on its "context and mood." The fact that Nicole holds a teaching position at a putatively Reformed Seminary indicates that the heirs of Reformation don't understand the issues. The Presbyterians who pay Nicole's salary should stop doing so.

Phil Roberts, Director of Interfaith Witness for the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board (his business card must be set in three point type) pointed out that "The basic agreements regarding salvation appear to be

nullified by the questions which the document says require further exploration. How is it that sacramental grace is still an outstanding question [when] salvation by faith alone is affirmed by the document?" However, as we have seen, salvation by faith alone is not affirmed by the document—it only seems that way, and Mr. Roberts has not seen the central flaw in the document's doctrine of justification.

Paige Patterson, President of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, said that it "was an achievement to get the Catholic signers to affix their signatures to a statement this lucid on justification by faith. On the other hand, Baptist evangelicals don't have any business signing any doctrinal consensus papers with Rome until Rome disassociates itself from the Council of Trent" (*The Christian News*, December 15, 1997). Mr. Patterson doesn't understand justification by faith alone either, if he thinks "The Gift of Salvation" is lucid.

Mark Coppenger, President of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City told *Christianity Today*: "I loved most of what I read in this document, both the content and the spirit," but he did not sign it because it appeared to him that the Catholics were hedging.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, hesitated at saying the document affirms justification by faith alone: "Justification by faith alone, if genuinely affirmed by Catholics and evangelicals, would require repudiation of baptismal regeneration, purgatory, indulgences, and many other issues presently affirmed by Roman Catholic doctrine."

In his introduction to "The Gift of Salvation" in *Christianity Today* (December 8, 1997), Timothy George noted that the document produced by the Cassidy Group is an "unofficial" counterpart of the official "Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" issued earlier in 1997. Rome realizes what the central theological issue is, and Rome is moving deliberately and effectively to heal the wound inflicted on her in the sixteenth

century by the preaching of the Gospel. Rome apparently is finding plenty of eager dupes—useful idiots, Lenin called them—among the ersatz-evangelicals to accomplish its goal.

The twentieth century has been an ecumenical century. Rome has moved as never before to heal its wound, and to incorporate all professors and churches within itself. These conversations, dialogues, and working relationships with non-Roman ecclesiastical organizations are far too numerous to list here; they have ranged from conversations with the Anglicans in Belgium in the 1920s, led by Cardinal Mercier, to continuous ecumenical efforts with the Lutherans, Anglicans, National Council and World Council of Churches, the charismatics and Pentecostals, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the ersatz-evangelicals. Billy Graham, the most famous Arminian evangelist of the twentieth century, has sought and received the participation of Romanists in his "crusades" since the late 1950s. The Vatican intends to reinstate its monopoly, and many are worshipping the beast.

The existence of groups like the Colson-Neuhaus Group is not new; what it demonstrates, however, is how thoroughly theologically corrupt the ersatz-evangelicals are. Christians have long known that the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, the mainline denominations, and the charismatic movement are anti-Christian; now the Cassidy-Colson-Neuhaus Group is making it clear that Evangelicalism is fundamentally at one with Romanism. The Synod of Dordt condemned the Arminian theology of the ersatz-evangelicals as a doctrine from the pit of Hell. Except for a scattered remnant, the American heirs of the Reformation have repudiated the faith of their fathers, they have abandoned the Gospel, and they are falling over each other in their eagerness to fawn before the beast. In the beast they see power and influence, success, respectability, fame, and riches--and they want to enjoy the things the beast can provide.

*Let no one deceive you by any means, for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is*

*called god or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. . . . For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. . . . The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who do not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

*Now a great sign appeared in Heaven: a woman clothed with the Sun, with the Moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then, being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.*

*And another sign appeared in Heaven: Behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of Heaven and threw them to the Earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and his throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*

*And war broke out in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for him in Heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the Earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

*Then I heard a loud voice saying in Heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the Word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O*

*Heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the Earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."*

*Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the Earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the Earth helped the woman, and the Earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.*

*Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast. . . .*

*Then I saw another beast coming up out of the Earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the Earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from Heaven on the Earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the Earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the Earth to make an image of the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.*

**For further reading:**

Charles Hodge. *Justification by Faith Alone*. The Trinity Foundation, 1994. Paperback, \$8.95.

Horatius Bonar. *The Everlasting Righteousness*. The Trinity Foundation, 1995. Paperback, \$8.95.