

*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

*"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!"*

Eze. 7:6 (Moffau)



E & C T - 7

THE CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE

Editor's Preface

This issue concludes the series of reviews of the essays in the book - *Evangelicals & Catholics Together*. In our judgment the two most important essays are the ones by Dr. J. I. Packer and John Richard Neuhaus. We devoted two issues of *WNN* to Packer's and this issue in its entirety to what Neuhaus wrote.

There are certain salient points made by Nuehaus which dare not be overlooked. He views the ECT Accord as a part of the objective of Rome for the coming millennium - a "springtime of Christian unity." He boldly outlines the Roman Catholic difference, and by difference he does not only mean contrast with the position of the Evangelicals, but also why the Roman position is superior and should be the ultimate one. To justify this difference, he alludes to Scripture, not always accurately but often with telling effect. We have not been able, because of space limitations, to discuss in each instance his use of Scripture to justify his position, but it should be evident what issues we will face in the very near future and what we should be doing now to prepare for that confrontation - studying the Bible carefully and thoroughly.

Let us not be naive. We shall not only face what Rome is teaching but the combined forces which result from the hand clasp across the gulf. We should not forget that in the first confrontation with the Evangelicals, the Adventists lost. Perhaps it would be worth one's time to review the SDA-Evangelical Conferences and really note what caused the veritable rout on key doctrinal questions which were a part of basic Adventism. We should also remember that the men were "historic" Adventists who confronted the Evangelicals. Many of them but a few years previous had been a part of the 1952 Bible Conference where "historic" Adventism had been reaffirmed.

Inasmuch as we have devoted this full issue to the review of Neuhaus' essay, the article is long and involved. You will not get the full benefit intended by a one-time reading, and merely through a casual reading. You will have to do some serious thinking on the points raised and the answers projected by Neuhaus. "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion." (Amos 6:1)

E & C T - 7

The final essay of the book, Evangelicals & Catholics Together, was written by Richard John Neuhaus, a Lutheran minister turned Roman Catholic, and who with Chuck Colson laid the groundwork for the Evangelical and Catholic Accord. In his essay, Neuhaus attempts two things: 1) he addresses some of the criticisms which the accord occasioned, and 2) gives reasons to believe that at this time in human history, Christians have a rendezvous with destiny. He titled his essay, "The Catholic Difference" and chose a quote from John Paul II's book, Crossing the Threshold of Hope - "Be not afraid!" - for his theme thought.

Neuhaus uses the term, kairos, one word in the Greek for time, which suggests "an opportune and decisive moment." He believes that God may be doing something in anticipation of the coming Third Millennium. He perceives of John Paul II as cognizant of this possibility as he looks forward to the year 2000 as a "springtime of evangelism" and a "springtime of Christian unity." He writes: "There is a tremor of an intimation that something like a kairos may be at hand." (p. 176)

As a part of this "tremor," Neuhaus perceives the ECT Accord as making such an impact. He writes - "I believe the declaration and the discussion it is generating will be a continuing point of reference for many years to come." Then he states his reason: The document "reflects a historic reorientation in our understanding of the Christian mission in and to the world." After listing certain ideological political forces of this present century, which he now considers to lie "in ashes," and the collapse of "a secular Enlightenment," he writes:

"It is not too much to say, that as we enter the third millennium, the world historical stage has been largely cleared to make room for the presentation of the Christian understanding of the human drama, the Divine-human drama that is the story of salvation. And it is not too much to believe that it is this moment that God is bringing evangelicals and Catholics together to present to the world its promised future in Jesus Christ." (p. 177)

This should cause us to pause and sense the import of this whole Evangelical and Catholic togetherness. It is a union across the gulf that has long separated Romanism and Protestantism. But what "gospel" and which "Christ" is to be presented to the world? Neuhaus claims that "Christianity is today the champion of universal truth." But again, the question must be asked not only as Pilate asked it, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) - but as Jesus answered it - "I am the way, the

truth and the life." (John 14:6) As we continue to survey Neuhaus' essay, we shall see how he answered it from the Catholic viewpoint.

From the Neuhaus viewpoint, the most important affirmation of the Accord document is that "all who accept Christ as Lord and Saviour are brothers and sisters in Christ. Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ. We have not chosen one another, just as we have not chosen Christ. He has chosen us, and He has chosen us to be his together." Here again is a deceptive facet, and brings to mind the original manuscript written by Wieland and Short in 1950. Two chapters were devoted to "The True Christ vs. the False Christ." In their revised edition of 1987, this was largely omitted or toned down - and tragically at a time when the church and the religious world were moving to what we see today. It depends on which Christ we proclaim as Lord as to whether we are "brothers and sisters in Christ" be it in the Church, or as a part of an independent ministry, or in fellowship with a group outside of the Community of Adventism. There is but one true Christ though there be many false christs.

This is equally true in regard to the gospel. There is but one gospel and that gospel is "the everlasting gospel." Tragically within Adventism today, there is being proclaimed by "the many voices" a false gospel which purports to be the true gospel, but verily a gospel that Paul would not recognize.

It is over this "most important affirmation of ECT" that Neuhaus perceives a skepticism from both the left and the right. He sees the "liberal" Christians as viewing the document as a "sociopolitical compact" between Christian conservatives with the theological affirmations as so much veneer. The Evangelicals on the right who oppose this document do so because they believe that naive members of their group have been taken in by the Roman Catholics. Neuhaus freely admits that there has been very little theological criticism from the Roman Catholic side. This in itself should be a cause for concern. Neuhaus dismisses this concern by saying that Catholics "are accustomed to ecumenical engagements" and that such engagements hold no fears. He says that any talk about "ecclesial reconciliation" is premature. That would be fifty or one hundred years down the road if time should last. What then is the significance of this accord? He writes:

"As for our historical moment, it is enough that, after four centuries of suspicion and hostility, we have found one another; it is enough that we are able to address our differences with candor and clarity; it is enough that we are learning to engage one another in mutual respect for the institutions, traditions, and patterns of discipleship that have developed over the years of our separation... It is more than enough. It is something like a kairos. (p. 180)

What if in the encounter of the wilderness, Jesus had entered into an "ecumenical engagement" with Satan and concluded that after all the centuries of separation, they had found themselves and that they could work together for the good of the kingdoms of this world. What a kairos that would have been! The situation is no different in this encounter. Paul states without equivocation that the machinations of "the man of sin," "that Wicked one," are "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." (II Thess. 2:9) There is no fellowship of righteousness with unrighteousness; no communion of light with darkness; no concord between Christ and Satan. (II Cor. 6:14-15) The moment such a dialogue would begin; that moment there is the admission that there is some light in darkness; some righteousness in unrighteousness. Only the conviction that we have a truth that admits of no compromise, and hold to that conviction are we safe. However, we must be sure we have that truth. Elijah was sure - why continue to vacillate between two opinions? Jesus was sure - "I am the way, the truth and the life."

It is at this very point that Neuhaus begins his defense against the criticisms leveled against the Accord. He thought, so he states, that the assertion in the Accord was "quite uncontroversial" which read - "There are different ways of being Christian...that we are all to be one does not mean that we are all to be identical in our way of following the one Christ." He indicated that certain evangelicals objected that "there is only one right way of being a Christian and that is the way revealed in the Bible." He said - "True enough," but - and confused the diversity of gifts through the Spirit as evidencing diversity of ways for becoming a Christian. While there are "diversity of gifts" there is only one Spirit of truth, and while there are "differences of administration," there is only one Lord - who is the way, the truth and the life. (See I Cor. 12:4-5) We dare not confuse the one gate and narrow way with the graciousness of God in giving us manifold gifts as we walk in that way.

Neuhaus at this point begins a very subtle line of argument to emphasize "The Catholic Difference." He emphasizes the term, *catholic*, and suggests that Roman Catholics are not the only ones who claim the term "for all Christians who confess the great creed of Nicea affirm their faith in the 'one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.'" Then he emphasizes that the term, *evangelical*, is a general term with no "copyright" attached. It is a term which refers to the "good news" of the gospel embraced by all Christians "although they do not always articulate that gospel in the same way." (p. 181) In other words, the difference is between the emphasis on Church (*catholic*) as community, and the emphasis on the giving the "good news" (*evangelical*). To Neuhaus, the Accord is simply saying that those formulating it found themselves to be both catholic and evangelical thus they could be together.

While the question returns to the basic issue of what is the true gospel, and there is only one, there is also another factor which we need to recall. It is the injection of the Nicene Creed into the presentation. The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches has adopted the Constantinopolitan-Nicene version of this creed as the basis of their objective to bring about visible unity within the Christian community. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in its 1980 Dallas Statement of Beliefs incorporated the same version into its beliefs.

Neuhaus uses several pages of his essay in discussing the meaning of "evangelical," and "Evangelical" in contrast to "catholic," and "Catholic." It is true that evangelicals have no super church structure, but operate as individual "spiritual entrepreneurs" each with his following. This seems to disturb Neuhaus because he writes - "If in the years ahead evangelicals develop a more communal and ecclesial understanding of what it means to be a Christian, evangelicals and Catholics may come closer together in appreciating the different ways of being Christian." (p. 182) He sees the evangelicals who are opposed to ECT as people who are against Roman Catholicism, as well as against mainline liberal Protestantism, but who if they perceived the necessity as he perceives it, of having an "ecclesial" structure to be a Christian, then there could be a closer "togetherness" between Catholics and all Evangelicals. He looks forward to this possibility and writes:

As we look to the possible reconfigurations of the entire Christian movement in the twenty-first century - configurations that will also involve developments in the Catholic Church - the Spirit may lead us to discover ways of being together and acting together in a manner that comprehends differences that are now thought to be dividing. That at least is the hope held out by ECT. (ibid.)

Neuhaus wants "evangelicals" to be "Evangelicals," to be "a distinctive ecclesial community," because he perceives that "serious engagement with different ways of being Christian requires a measure of what might be described as ecclesial confidence." Behind this whole attempt at "togetherness" is the concept of "unity in diversity" but with "independent" identities involved, how do you achieve a unity that is not so diversified that Rome finds it impossible to accomplish its objectives.

With this background of thinking, Neuhaus enters into "the Catholic difference." The Roman Church makes distinctions among the various groups in which it is in ecumenical dialogue. Vatican II distinguishes between "churches and ecclesial communities." The churches of the East which composes the Orthodox Church are fully churches. "The Catechism of the Catholic Church" quotes the statement of Pope Paul VI that the communion with the Orthodox Church is so profound 'that it lacks little

to attain the fullness that would permit a common celebration of the Lord's Eucharist." However, with other ecclesial communities and Christian groupings, the situation is different, sometimes dramatically different, from the Roman viewpoint. Neuhaus gives a spectrum of five stages of a group's progress toward Rome - hostility to coexistence to cooperation to sharing to full communion. He perceives ECT as having past hostility, coexistence to cooperation and entering into the "sharing phase" - "those sacred activities that spring from the heart of being Christians together" such as "evangelization, prayer, Scriptural study, and correction and edification in the gospel." (p. 186)

This whole picture should alert us as to the steps which Rome is now taking to achieve its goal of the universal dominion she once held. It should also alert us to the significance of the various ecumenical moves which have been taken by the hierarchy of the Adventist Church in the last few decades as well as help us to evaluate present activities. It may not be direct contact with Rome but all ecumenical dialogue serves but one purpose and that is unity, and the direction of that unity is Romeward. There is but one acceptable unity, and that is unity in the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

Neuhaus indicates that even though the ECT Accord brings evangelicals and Catholics to a position approaching the fourth stage, it is still "a long way from what the Catholic Church declares to be the goal of the search for greater Christian unity which is full communion." (p. 187) He indicates that this full communion may never be reached between evangelicals and Catholics short of the final kingdom of God. The Vatican II Council declared that "this holy objective - the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ - transcends human powers and gifts." The Council, therefore, stated that they are awaiting a manifestation of "the power of the Holy Spirit" to bring about this objective. Here is stated the objective, and a recognition of how they perceive that goal will ultimately be achieved. While it will be termed "the working of the Holy Spirit" the Bible declares it will be "the spirits of devils working miracles." (Rev. 16:14)

Neuhaus next proceeds to a discussion of what constitutes the "Church." Is the true Church visible or invisible; perfect or imperfect? On this latter question, Neuhaus uses Luther's phrase - *simul iustus et peccator* ("at the same time righteous and a sinner") - which Luther applied to the individual Christian, to describe the Church. He borrowed another expression to define the Church - "Chaste Whore." In a warped application of an event at the Cross, Neuhaus writes:

On the cross, the dying Lord entrusts Mary to John, but note the startling absence of Peter from this scene. In the New Testament, Peter represents the institutional

Church par excellence. Peter is, in Catholic teaching, the rock on whom Jesus would build his Church, and he reflects at the same time the cowardice and denial that is, until the end of time, an inextricable aspect of Christ's body, the Church." (p. 190)

Neuhaus draws another line between the Church, and the members of that Church. While admitting that one can use the expression - "a sinful Church" - he noted that Vatican II carefully avoided the expression because "sin does not implicate the Church in its formal constituents (apostolic faith, sacraments, and ministry)" but rather only the members, both clerical and laity. "The concern here is to acknowledge fully the sinfulness of the members of the Church, while taking with full seriousness the truth that the Church is the body of Christ who is like us in all respects except sin." (p. 191)

This lays the groundwork for the first question - Is the Church visible or invisible. While admitting to the fact that there is a Church invisible, Neuhaus declares - "The Church is conceived and constituted Christologically" - and then quotes Ignatius of Antioch - "Where there is Jesus Christ, there is the Catholic Church." Ignatius meant "universal" not Roman Catholic, and the converse is not true - that where the Roman Catholic Church is, there is Jesus Christ. However, Neuhaus is trying to make a point in regard to "the Catholic difference." This should be fully understood. He wrote concerning Ignatius' observation:

Twenty centuries later, Vatican Council II elaborates that insight by affirming that in local churches 'the faithful are gathered together through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ [?], and [where] the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated.... In these communities, though they may often be small and poor, or existing in the diaspora, Christ is present, through whose power and influence the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is constituted.' The local church is understood, first of all, as the priests and the faithful gathered around their apostolically ordained bishop in a particular place. Thus each diocese is a local or particular church that is fully and rightly ordered by virtue of its communion with another particular church, the church of Rome, which, in the words of Saint Ignatius, 'presides in charity' over the entire Christian people." (p. 192-193)

As a point of passing observation, one would need to change only a few words in the above paragraph and it would also describe another hierarchical structure with which many of us are painfully familiar.

Neuhaus next passes to a discussion of "The Church: High and Low." He observes that Protestants have a low doctrine of the Church while Catholics hold a high doctrine of the same. The Protestant position was due to

a Reformation protest against the ecclesiastical claims of Rome to authority and jurisdiction. Neuhaus declares that the Catholic position prior to Vatican II - that there was no salvation outside the Church - was responsible for this position. However, he insists that since Vatican II there has been a change. In support of this assertion, he quotes the Council document, *Lumen Gentium*, "The sole Church of Christ is that which our Savior, after His resurrection entrusted to Peter's pastoral care, commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it... This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in (*subsisti in*) the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him."

To the average reader, this does not reflect a change but rather is saying the same thing over again in different language. Neuhaus maintains that "scholars highlight the fact that the council very deliberately said *subsisti in* and not *est*. That is, the Council did not say that the sole Church of Christ is the [Roman] Catholic Church." Then the "double talk" begins. "If one wants to know where the Church of Christ is, the answer is that it is here, it subsists here, in the [Roman] Catholic Church." Then Neuhaus quotes the *Catechism*, and this is interesting in what it says. As you read, analyze it carefully:

Furthermore, many elements of sanctification and of the truth are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church: the written Word of God, the life of grace: faith, hope, and charity, with other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements. Christ's Spirit uses these churches and ecclesial communities as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church. All these blessings come from Christ and lead to Him, and are in themselves calls to Catholic unity. (p. 195)

This is astounding. There is still no salvation outside of the Catholic Church because what "salvation" is to be found outside, is derived from and through the Roman Catholic Church. Neuhaus calls this "a God-given gravitation" towards unity with Rome. He says the "pull" works both ways. Not only have Protestants returned to Rome - he himself is a prime example - but Catholics are drawn into unity with other Christians "precisely because of their communion with the Catholic Church, for it is here that they learned to recognize as brothers and sisters those who are 'truly but imperfectly' in communion with the one Christ and the one Church." In this conclusion, we see the justification for ECT. (p. 196) How the Evangelicals who signed the Accord, and/or wrote Essays for this book can continue their names on the document is mystifying in the light of this forthright position stated by Neuhaus, and are they

deceived and thus blinded?

This opens some other questions: Can I be in fellowship with other hierarchical system structured as Rome is structured, and not find an affinity with Rome which could ultimately lead me into communion with Rome? Did not Dr. P. T. Magan warn the delegates at the 1903 General Conference as they were about to vote the new Constitution that any one familiar with church history could come to "no other conclusion but that the principles which are to be brought in through this proposed constitution, and in the way in which they are brought in, are the same principles, and introduced in precisely the same way, as they were hundreds of years ago when the Papacy was made." (1903 *GC Bulletin*, p. 150 Where does affinity to, lead? Did not Ellen White hear the divine "Instructor" say just following this conference - "How is the faithful city become an harlot?" (8T, p. 250)

Returning to an analysis of Neuhaus' essay, he becomes at this point very explicit concerning the position and claim of Rome. He writes: "The Catholic claim is that the Catholic Church is the fully and rightly ordered expression of Christ's Church through time." The chief reason he gives for this assertion is that of the "Petrine ministry" as perceived by Rome. He admits - "Of course the line of historical development from Petrine ministry to papal primacy is not undisputed. But why is it to be recognized? Because "Catholic doctrine recognizes that development as an instance of the Holy Spirit continuing to guide the Church into the fullness of truth." (p. 19)

What can be said in answer to this reasoning for sooner than many realize, we shall have to give an answer. Peter did preside at the first business meeting of the Apostolic Church after the ascension of Jesus. (Acts 1:15) It is of interest to note his "style" as "chairman" - his appeal to the Scriptures, and the decision made by the group. (vers. 16, 23) Peter was the chief spokesman on the Day of Pentecost (Acts. 2:14). However, he did not preside at the first General Session of the Church. He had been superseded by James. We have not perceived the whyfore because of our lack of in-depth study; but the contrast of "style" can be distinctly observed. (Acts 15:19) It might be more accurate if Rome claimed a succession from James.

Following his claim for a "Petrine ministry," Neuhaus begins some more double talk. He says that ECT repeatedly insists "that the only unity we can rightly seek is unity in the truth." He recognizes that if such searching were done, there would be some risks entailed. Somebody may have to change. He even goes so far as to write that

the risk is welcomed if our deepest devotion is indeed to truth and not merely to our present views of church affiliation." Who can argue with that! Then he illustrates. He suggests that a Protestant who comes to believe that the Catholic Church is "in fact the most fully and rightly ordered expression of Christ's Church through time" but who "may believe [that] the Catholic Church is wrong about a number of teachings" does not believe that the Catholic Church "is what she claims to be" when she claims to be "the authoritative teacher of Christian truth." He is saying simply that certain things taught by the Roman Church are actually not Biblical, but the Church guided by the Spirit-indited "magisterium" is a continuing source of truth. This line of reasoning and position is not foreign in Adventist thinking. We need to ask ourselves whether we are following the Roman position adapted to Adventist nomenclature, or are we truly Protestant - "The Word of God alone is truth, and the basis of all truth." Further, we need to recognize the continuing guidance of the Spirit into all truth but in that guidance we need to see to it that it is not self contradictory. We dare not reject advancing truth nor deny existing truth. In the coming confrontation we will need to know what truth is in contrast to tradition and fable.

Neuhaus approaches this question again from another angle with telling force. He states that most evangelicals have "a high Christology, having accepted the decisions of the great councils of the fourth and fifth century as to the true interpretation of Scripture." Then he comes in for "the kill"! He writes:

Implicit in that acceptance is a trust in the Spirit's guidance of the Church, not only in recognizing and defining orthodox Christology but also in recognizing and defining the Scriptures to which orthodox teaching appeals. With respect to the Bible, Christology, and much else, decisions were made at a determinate time in a determinate place by a determinate community that then called itself and today calls itself the Catholic Church." (p. 198)

Dare I write into my theology the positions of the Councils - Nicea and others? Should I not rather know what the New Testament writers, indited by the Holy Spirit, taught, and what that revelation actually reveals in regard to truth? A deeper study of that Word will bring forth advancing truth that can be trusted for the Word is verily the Holy Spirit's "take off" point.

Neuhaus next turns his attention to the "Article" upon which the Church stands or falls. He claims that the distracters of ECT claim that a discussion of the doctrine of "Church" (ecclesiology) is empty unless agreement is secured on the issues of "justification by faith alone," because this is declared to be the basic true "gospel." Then he adopted the approach that Paul used before the Jewish Council (Acts 23:6-7), stating that

certain sections of evangelicals were closer to Roman Catholic perceptions of justification and sanctification than were some of the evangelical distracters of ECT. However, since these antagonists to ECT "have a strong and well-earned influence" among those who do not hold to the "Lutheran or Calvinist" traditions, in other words, those who are closer to Roman perceptions, he directs his answer to the antagonists. He calls into perspective his own religious experience which was "powerfully" influenced by the formula - "justification by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone." Then he writes - "The truth of the gospel that the formula was intended to protect is, I am convinced, entirely compatible ... with the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church." He claims that the formula is a theological construct of the sixteenth century that is not found in the Bible, and is absent from the theological debates of the Reformation. He said that, because of these "facts," the ECT Accord affirmed that which is "undisputed biblical truth."

The Community of Adventism is not exempt from this controversy. Those who seek to attack this formula which is Biblically based, in spite of Neuhaus' assertion, do so under the guise of an attack on Calvinistic teachings. It should be kept in mind that to accept the Biblical revelation of the doctrine of justification does not mean that one accepts the Calvinistic corollary that "once saved always saved," or that such a deduction is warranted. Too often, we simply do not rightly divide the Word of Truth, or to phrase it another way, we throw the baby out with the bath water.

Let us restate the issue clearly. The position of the Roman Church is expressed in the Council of Trent - Vatican II did not annul it - that those who believe in justification by faith alone are anathema. This on the other hand is the Reformation position based on the declaration of Paul, who claimed to have been given this gospel by Jesus Christ. The question is simply - Is there a middle ground between Rome and Paul? There are those calling themselves "historic" Adventists who by their teachings declare there is. Thus we face a crisis as to what constitutes the "everlasting gospel" of the Three Angels's Messages and the fact that the message of 1888 was declared to be the Third Angel's message in verity.

The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was introduced into the controversy by an article appearing in *Christianity Today* (Dec. 12, 1994). In summary, Neuhaus replied:

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, then, does not reject the distinctive Reformation formula that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. Neither does it affirm it. It does affirm its continuity with the Council of Trent, which condemned the formula in the sense that it understood the

formula at that time. (p. 204)

This is a poor attempt to explain the critical conclusions drawn on this point in the CURE document which Packer and Horton had released. (See WVN XXIX - 8(96), p. 2, col. 1; art. "E&CT-6b") It is just plain double talk, because Neuhaus admits that the *Catechism* affirms its continuity with the Council of Trent. On the Gospel, Romanism has not given a single centimeter, nor will it.

Neuhaus seeks to explain what the *Catechism* would have stated had it addressed the issue:

Were the Catechism to address directly the justification formula, it would have had to make clear that grace is not alone but confirms human freedom, that living faith is not alone but issues in a life of obedience, that Christ is not alone but always to be found in the company of his Church. (ibid.)

These three assertions in regard to the Reformation formula if discussed would require a separate article. However, it is the last part - Christ is always "in company with his Church" - which Neuhaus emphasizes as he concludes his perception of "the Roman Catholic difference." Note carefully his conclusions:

The Catholic cannot agree with 'the decision of the committed Christian with respect to his communal allegiance' if that decision means living in permanent separation from the community in which the Church of Jesus Christ, fully and rightly ordered, subsists. ...

In Catholic teaching, every element of Christian faith and life gravitates toward Christian unity in communion with the Petrine ministry instituted by Jesus and continued in the ministry of the bishop of Rome. (p. 214)

In simple language, the whole objective is back to Rome and the Papacy. In a continuing section of his essay, Neuhaus becomes emphatic on this point. He wrote:

In accord with the entirety of orthodox Christianity, from the first century to this very day, Catholics are convinced that the Church is an integral part of the truth intended for us by God. Permit me to put it more sharply, for this is the heart of 'the Catholic difference': For the Catholic, faith in Christ and faith in the Church are one act of faith. (pp. 215-216)

This is not just a passing issue in the dialogue between Evangelicals and Catholics, this issue enters the community of Adventism. Loyalty and relationship to the Church is at the heart of the present conflict which has divided the Adventist Community. Do we continue loyalty to the Church even though it alters the truth committed

to its trust, thus separating ourselves from Christ who is the truth; or do we follow Him who is the truth and separate ourselves from the Church. To what and to whom must our supreme loyalty be? To one segment of the Adventist Community today comes the searching question - can I be loyal to the message of righteousness by faith alone, and at the same time be loyal to an organization which rejects the truth committed to its trust? Or will I accept "the Roman Catholic difference" that Christ and the Church are one.

What Christ intended the Church to be, and what the Church is, are two different things. This is just what the Jewish Christian discovered when he accepted Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. The God of Abraham, and the Jewish Church were not one. What then was he to do? Paul responded -

Ye are come unto mount Sion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven. (Hebrews 12:22-23)

While this article will conclude the specific review of the Essays found in *Evangelicals & Catholics Together*, it will not be the last time that we will touch base with these presentations. There is much enlightenment in the issues raised here as to what we shall face a few years hence when the final confrontation between the religion of the Bible - the Gospel - comes head-on with the religion of fable and tradition. #

Erratum - The issue identification of the WVN for August should have been XXIX-8(96) instead of XXXIX-8(95).

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