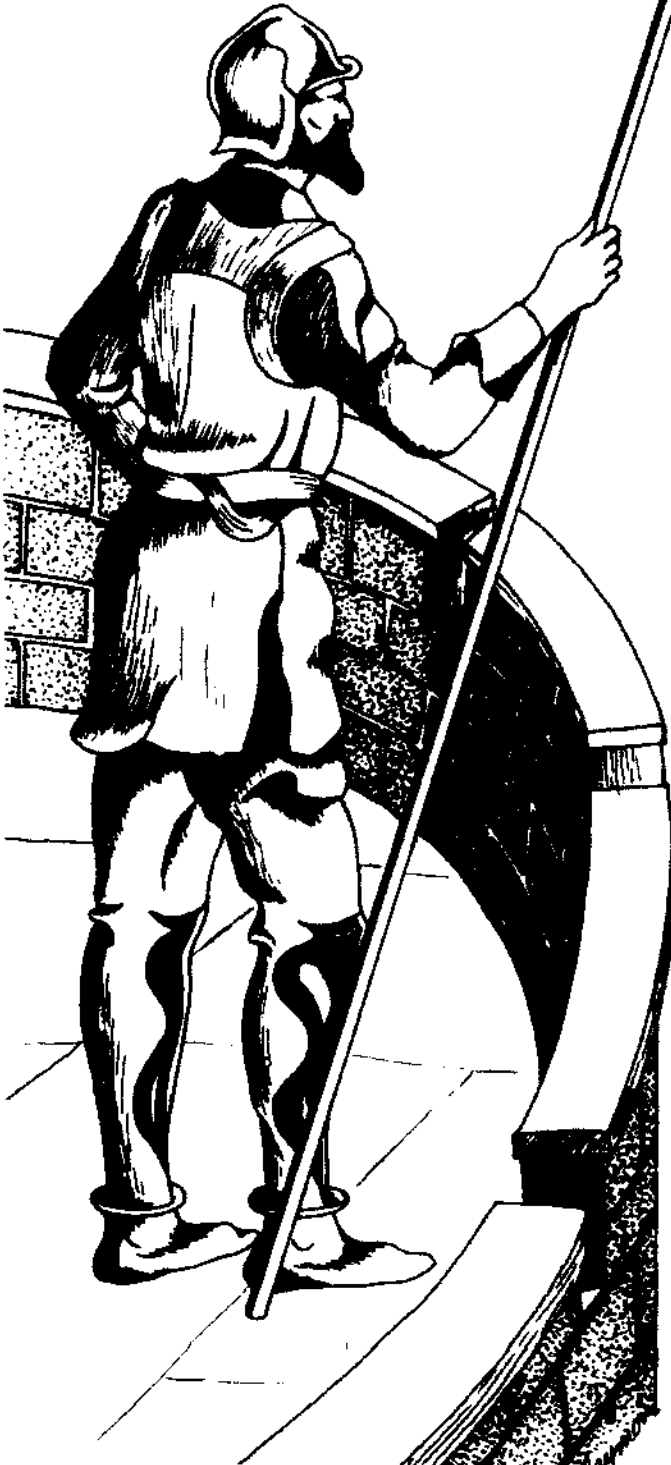


*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

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

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



ROME'S VISION FOR CHURCH UNITY

Will the WCC Work the Miracle Before It?

The focus of the Adventist Community at the time of the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1991 at Canberra, Australia, was centered on the daring act of some young dissidents in releasing a banner before the assembly which read - "Seventh-day Adventists believe... THIS PROPHESED ROMeward UNITY IS THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST!" There can be no question that the Spirit of the Lord directed the timing of this bold act because "at the very moment" that the young men released their banner, "the closer links between the WCC and Roman Catholic Church were being discussed." (The (Australian) Record, March 23, 1991, p. 10) This act tended to overshadow a consideration of the basics involved in the links between Rome and the WCC; however, it is not too late to do so, and it needs to be done.

"When you're on to a good thing stick to it." This was declared to be "the current and continuing philosophy colouring the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to the World Council of Churches," in the lead article of The Catholic Leader for February 24, 1991. The article was captioned - "WCC and Church: Rome's Vision of the Future." This emphasis - **Rome's Vision for the Future** - dare not be overlooked. The article was based on questions and answers given at a news conference which involved Archbishop Edward Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. (Cassidy was also the leader of the Vatican's observer group at the Seventh Assembly of the WCC)

What is Rome's "vision" and how are they using the WCC to achieve this vision? Cassidy emphasized the fact that the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC by stating, "We are not members and have never been members of the WCC," and he "didn't foresee any likelihood of a change of the current observer status for the Roman Catholic Church at the WCC." [This is to all intents and purposes the same language used by the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in describing their church's relationship to the WCC] Cassidy very frankly stated

that "from Rome's point of view, the WCC was rather long on social and political issues and short on theology and doctrine." However, he described the links between the two groups as "close and constant," "a very special one, unique in its form." While there is a Joint Working Group between the WCC and the RC Church, Cassidy indicated that the Faith and Order Commission "was of particular interest to the Roman Catholic Church as it dealt with matters of doctrine, questions of faith and order, and those other questions in which we are primarily concerned in our relationships with the WCC." At the present the Roman Catholic Church is represented on the Faith and Order Commission by 12 theologians. It is through this commission that the Roman Church is seeking to realize its "vision."

The Faith and Order Commission of the WCC and the Roman Church have the same goal - "full visible unity." In a message to the Seventh Assembly of the WCC in Canberra, Pope John Paul II declared:

"The present tragic situation of our troubled world confirms once again humanity's need for reconciliation, its need for an ever more authentic witness of the biblical (sic) message of peace, justice and the integrity of Creation. But the sad fact is that our testimony to these values is less convincing to the degree that the world continues to be confronted by our divisions. **Herein lies the urgency of the ecumenical task.**" (Our emphasis)

[This excerpt from the papal message was placed in a special emphasized "box" in the midst of the article outlining "Rome's vision of the future" appearing in The Catholic Leader cited above]

The Faith and Order Commission is charged by the World Council "to keep always before them their accepted obligation to work towards manifesting more visibly God's gift of Church unity." In fact the Commission's By-Laws declare their stated aim to be "to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, in order that the world might believe." (Faith and Order Paper, #111, pp. vii-viii.)

The first major step toward this goal came in 1982 at Lima, Peru, with the adoption of the statement on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM). It has been heralded as "an ecumenical event of unprecedented proportions." Inasmuch as "virtually all the confessional traditions are

included in the Commission's membership," it is unprecedented in the modern ecumenical movement" that "theologians of such widely different traditions should be able to speak so harmoniously about baptism, eucharist and ministry" as was done in this statement. (*ibid.* p. ix)

One of the issues which arose during the Seventh Assembly of the WCC involved the celebration of the eucharist. The observers of the Roman Church were banned from partaking of the shared eucharist as celebrated at the session even though, from the released reports, the Lima liturgy was used. In the press conference, Cassidy was asked why in view of the Pope's message to the Assembly, the Vatican didn't "okay a 'concession' by officially allowing other Christians to receive the eucharist at celebrations under Roman Catholic auspices, and vice versa." (EPS 91.02.74) Cassidy's response should be carefully noted. He judged "that sharing the eucharist is the **'ultimate sign and seal'** of church unity, and thus a step with many and major doctrinal implications." (*ibid.*)

To assess the import of this judgment, we must note what BEM said in regard to the eucharist. The statement is divided into three sections: I. The Institution of the Eucharist, II. The Meaning of the Eucharist, and III. The Celebration of the Eucharist. Section II contains thirty three paragraphs plus commentaries on several of the paragraphs.

Paragraph 8 reads in part - "The eucharist is the sacrament of the unique sacrifice of Christ... What it was God's will to accomplish in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, God does not repeat. These events are unique and can neither be repeated nor prolonged. In the memorial of the eucharist, however, the Church offers **its intercession** in communion with Christ, our great High Priest." (emphasis supplied)

The comment on this declaration reads:

"It is in the light of the significance of the eucharist as intercession that references to the eucharist in Catholic theology as 'propitiatory sacrifice' may be understood. The understanding is that there is only one expiation, that of the unique sacrifice of the cross, made actual in the eucharist and presented before the Father in the intercession of Christ and of the Church for all humanity."

Drawing still closer to Roman teaching, paragraph

13 reads in part:

"The eucharistic meal is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the sacrament of his real presence. ... Jesus said over the bread and the wine of the eucharist: 'This is my body... this is my blood...' What Christ declared is true, and this truth is fulfilled every time the eucharist is celebrated. The Church confesses Christ's real, living and active presence in the eucharist."

The explanation of how this is true is given in the next paragraph of the document. It reads:

"The Spirit makes the crucified and risen Christ really present to us in the eucharistic meal, fulfilling the words of institution. The presence of Christ is clearly the centre of the eucharist, and the promise contained in the words of the institution is therefore fundamental to the celebration. Yet it is the Father who is the primary origin and the final fulfillment of the eucharistic event. The incarnate Son of God by and in whom it is accomplished is its living centre. The Holy Spirit is the immeasurable strength of love which makes it possible and continues to make it effective. The bond between the eucharist and the mystery of the Triune God reveals the role of the Holy Spirit as the One who makes the historical words of Jesus present and alive."

It should be observed that in this statement the whole of the eucharistic question is tied to the foundational doctrine of Catholicism - the Trinity. Having gone so far as to embrace the Roman concept of the eucharist - the very presence of Christ in the bread and wine, why the ban of the Roman Catholic observers at the Seventh Assembly?

It needs to be noted that the Lima text received unanimous approval for transmission to the various churches for critique. For the first time in the history of the ecumenical movement, the Roman Catholic Church responded officially to the document. A 40-page text was prepared by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. According to Faith and Order Director Gunther Gassmann, the response included "affirmation of large sections of the BEM text." (EPS 87.07.32) Not having access to this 40-page text, we can only judge by the Ecumenical Press release which indicated that the major objection of Rome was in the section on "Ministry." Rome expressed its conviction that "ordained ministry requires sacramental ordination

by a bishop standing in the apostolic succession." (ibid.) It is only such a ministry who can celebrate the eucharist. In other words, "the Petrine role of the Bishop of Rome," along with the assumed creative power of the priests, is at issue

In section III - The Celebration of the Eucharist - the document reads:

"As the eucharist celebrates the resurrection of Christ, it is **appropriate** that it should take place at least every Sunday. As it is the new sacramental meal of the people of God, every Christian should be **encouraged** to receive communion frequently." (p. 16; emphasis supplied)

We noted above that Cassidy perceived of the celebration of the eucharist as the "ultimate sign and seal" of church unity. How does Rome relate the eucharist and unity? In an expanded edition (1991) of a Handbook for Today's Catholic, "the Last Supper" is defined according to Vatican II as "a sacrament of love, a **sign of unity**, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us." It is further declared that "this mystery is the very center and culmination of Christian life. It is the 'source and summit of all preaching of the Gospel... the center of the assembly of the faithful.'" (p. 34)

In another section of this Handbook, the reader is told how to receive communion. (p. 42) It is so simple; you just say "Amen," when receiving "the wafer, and "Amen" as an "Act of Faith," when the priest "raises the eucharistic bread or wine." But what does the "Amen" say? "In this way you profess your belief in the presence of Christ in the eucharistic bread and wine as well as in his Body, the Church." In other words, you are in "unity" with Rome!

THE NEXT STEP

While BEM was considered "as a search for a new way to approach sacramental questions that divide churches, so as to promote unity, a second Faith and Order Study is seeking to discover whether Christians today can confess their faith together ecumenically." However, the Commission is not drawing up a new Statement of Faith, but "rather, it asks whether churches today can 'witness to, confess, live out and celebrate in common... the same apostolic faith that was expressed in Holy Scriptures and summarized in the creeds of the early church.'" (One World, Jan-Feb., 1988, p. 15) The emphasis is not on

the Scriptures but on the creeds. The Creed chosen is the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of A.D. 381. This Creed defined Rome's teaching on the Godhead which is the central doctrine of that Church. In the Handbook noted above, the following statement is found:

"The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of Catholic Faith. Upon it is based all the other teachings of the Church. In the New Testament there is frequent mention of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...

"The Church studied this mystery with great care and, after four centuries of clarification, decided to state the doctrine in this way: in the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - truly distinct one from another. Thus in the words of the Athanasian Creed" The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three gods but one God." (pp. 11-12)

We may respond, what's wrong with this? I believe in the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit - "the heavenly Trio." Then I am ready to make the final affirmation of faith in the ecumenical movement. Or am I? So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true, that unless my mind is worked by the Holy Spirit, I will not be able to discern the difference. Instead of letting the Roman Church study the Bible for me and tell me what the doctrine of the Godhead should be, I need to study the Scriptures for myself, and know what is truth. Our problem is that there are contradicting voices today in the Community of Adventism, some expressing the Creed of A.D. 381, and there are other voices far a field in the other direction. Basically the Roman belief is One Substance in three manifestations; One God, yet, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The use being made of this doctrine in the ecumenical dialogue is most interesting. At the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order held in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, in August, 1993, the self assigned task was to "'re-vision the goal of visible unity' in terms of koinonia." The Moderator of the Commission, Mary Tanner, an Anglican, called this "the most promising theme of contemporary ecumenical theology." An orthodox theologian, Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamon, stated that "the notion of the church as koinonia is rooted in the faith of God as trinitarian." A report released by the Conference, defined koinonia as "a gracious fellowship in Christ." It "depicted this shared

life of Christians as rooted in the Triune God, who is the 'ultimate reality of relational life.' Consequently, 'unity in diversity are inseparable;' both must be safeguarded within the structure of the church." (One World, Oct. 1993, p. 15)

It is at this point that "the vision of Rome" and the "re-vision of the Faith and Order Commission" meet.

Cassidy in the news conference in Canberra at the time of the Seventh Assembly of the WCC said that any form of union would open up the whole area of very interesting ecumenical dialogue, "namely the diversity that one would look for in eventual unity of the Churches. I think that is something we have no doubt about in our ecumenical approach. We are not working towards **uniformity** among the Churches of the world. We are working towards the **unity** in faith and in communion...

"So I think we have no desire to make everyone look like a French or Australian Catholic, but to create a true unity of faith with a diversity of peoples and cultures according as the situation will develop." (The Catholic Leader, op. cit., p. 3; emphasis theirs)

"Unity in faith" is exactly what the present thrust of the Faith and Order Commission is attempting. Faith and Order Paper #153 - Confessing the One Faith - is "An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)." In the preface, a Roman Catholic cleric, Jean-Marie Tillard OP, and Moderator of the Apostolic Faith Steering Committee of the Faith and Order Commission wrote:

"The coming together of all Christians in an authentic **communion** of faith, evangelical life and mission **requires** the common confession of the apostolic faith. As many of the responses to the Lima document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry have shown, Christians cannot be truly united unless they recognize in each other the same apostolic faith, which is witnessed in word and in life. The document Confessing the One Faith is an instrument to draw the churches to a common understanding of this faith, **which has to be confessed**, especially in the celebration of baptism and eucharist, and proclaimed through the missionary work of all the Christian communities." (p. viii; last emphasis ours)

THE ADVENTIST CONNECTION

In 1965, the first meeting between Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders and representatives of the World Council of Churches convened under the sponsorship of the two organizers, Dr. B. B. Beach of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and Dr. Lukas Vischer of the Faith and Order Secretariat. The annual meetings which followed were formalized "in the sense that the employing bodies of the SDA participants have authorized and financed their presence and the executive committees of the three [European] Adventist Divisions involved have given their blessing by facilitating the selection of the SDA representatives; the World Council of Churches has defrayed the expenses of its group. The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has been kept informed regarding the meetings, though it has taken no direct, active part in the Consultations except through its three European Divisional branch offices." (So Much in Common, p. 98)

As a result of these Consultations, a statement regarding the SDA Church was published in the January, 1967, issue of the Ecumenical Review. Based largely on the book, Questions on Doctrine, this essay was "intended to serve as an introduction to the Seventh-day Adventist Church for any interested parties in the membership of the WCC." (ibid., p. 57) The essay closed with an invitation for the Church to join the WCC and was so interpreted by the SDA leadership. In a series of three articles responding to the essay, the Associate Editor of the Review & Herald, Raymond F. Cottrell, addressed this invitation in the final article.

What is striking about Cottrell's response for not joining the WCC is that he used the same reason as given by Archbishop Cassidy in 1991 as to why the Roman Catholic Church does not join, namely that the WCC is long on social and political issues but short on theology. Then Cottrell suggested that the Faith and Order Commission invite an Adventist presence to speak for them in the Commission's deliberations. He wrote:

'It is with no small measure of regret that SDA's do not find it possible, as an organization,

to be more closely associated with others who profess the name of Christ. On the other hand, if the Secretariat on Faith and Order, for instance, were to invite SDA's to appoint someone competent in that area to meet with their group from time to time and represent the SDA point of view, we could accept such an invitation with a clear conscience." (R&H, April 6, 1967, p. 13)

The invitation was not long in coming. The Central Committee of the WCC appointed Dr. Earle Hilgert, then vice-president for Academic Administration at Andrews University as a member of the 120 member Commission on Faith and Order. The leadership of the Church endorsed this selection. Events moved so rapidly in 1967 that Dr. Hilgert was able to attend the triennial meeting of the Commission in Bristol, England, July 30 to August 8, 1967. Dr. Hilgert has since become an ordained Presbyterian minister and served on the staff of McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. His replacement on the Faith and Order Commission was Dr. Raoul Dederen, also from Andrews University.

This request to be a part of the Faith and Order Commission is difficult to understand. The very By-Laws of the Commission clearly state that the aim of the Commission is "to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, in order that the world might believe." (Faith & Order Paper, #111, p. viii) To know this aim, and then request to be a part of this objective is to deny the very uniqueness of Adventism. Evidently, the leadership of the Church did not do its home work well; they did not read the fine print before signing on, or it was a deliberate move to take the Seventh-day Adventist Church into the Ecumenical mainstream.

With the appointment of Roman Catholic theologians to the Commission in 1968, the course was set. The first major step toward the realization of the Commission's stated aim came in 1982 in the transmission of the "Lima text" (BEM) to the churches, "along with the request for their response as a vital step in the ecumenical process of reception."

It is over this text and its transmission that there has been deception practiced by two "independent" ministries in their vilification of the leadership of the regular Church. On the back cover of the "Lima text" is to be found the

following statement:

"Over one hundred theologians met in Lima, Peru, in January 1982, and **recommended unanimously to transmit** this agreed statement - the Lima text - for the common study and official response of the churches. They represented virtually all the major church traditions: Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, Methodist, United, Disciples, Baptists, **Adventist** and Pentecostal." (Emphasis supplied)

When Osborne and Trefz were in working tandem, they charged that the leadership of the Church officially approved of this "Lima text," and cited the above statement. Not only did they misconstrue the statement, but they failed to check the fact that the Seventh-day Adventist Church did respond to this BEM document, and what that response was. This is deception of the highest order and reflects back on the integrity of the men involved in such practice. Dr. Dederen himself informed me that he and another member of the Commission abstained from voting approval of the BEM document, but did join in the vote to transmit the text to the churches for response. This information was transmitted to Trefz, but no reply was received.

The response of the Church to the "Lima text" was through the General Conference's Council on Inter-Church Relations. While noting this "text" as "unquestionably one of the World Council of Churches' most significant publications to date," in each area - Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry - the reply noted wherein there was agreement and wherein there was disagreement. On the "Eucharist," the reply reads - "The Faith and Order Statement appears to make the liturgical act the basis of redemption rather than the person's experience of repentance and forgiveness." It challenges the use of the phrase, "the presence of Christ" in the Lord's Supper asking does this mean, "present with" or "present in"? The "Conclusion" on the Ministry section states that "as it stands, it is too Catholic in intent, too influenced by the Orthodox, Anglican and Roman Catholic members of the Faith and Order Commission."

The Faith and Order Commission has not stopped with merely "the eucharistic fellowship" aspects of their stated goal, but has moved to how the churches can express their faith in common. For this purpose, another paper was prepared by the Commission, #153, "Confessing the One Faith." I wrote to the WCC Faith and Order Commission asking if the Adventist Church had responded to

this document, and if so, what was the response. In a letter dated 19 September 1994, Dr. Gunther Gassmann, Director of the Commission, replied that the Adventist Church has not yet responded. It is to be recalled that the report in One World (Jan-Feb 1988), announcing the advanced step beyond the BEM document, stated that the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of A.D. 381 was "already officially recognized by many churches." (p. 15) This is true, and includes the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is "the formula of one God existing in three co-equal Persons." (Early Christian Doctrines, p. 88) This is the formula adopted at the Dallas Session in 1980. Fundamental Statements of Belief, Number 2 - "The Trinity" - reads: "There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons." The leadership of the Church does not need to respond to the Faith and Order Paper #153 because it already confesses the Creed which is to be the basic confession of the "one faith."

The Consultations began officially in 1966 between representatives of the Adventist Church and representatives of the WCC. In 1967, the Adventist Church was represented on the Faith and Order Commission whose stated aim was "to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith." In 1988, the Faith and Order Commission embarked on its objective to achieve this goal. The Adventist Church in General Conference session had anticipated this goal and voted it as a Fundamental Belief of the Church in 1980. Is this merely the outworking of apostasy, or does this constitute evidence of sinister workings in the Church structure?

The hour is late, and decisions must be made. It should becoming increasingly evident that certain major independent ministries do not have the answer, and are not really seeking to find the answer, yet they continue to "fleece the sheep." (See Eze. 34:1-10)

‡

Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, word, koinonia.

κοινωνία, -ας, ἡ, (*κοινωνός*), *fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse*; in the N. T. as in class. Grk.

LET'S TALK IT OVER

There is an interesting word found in three languages - the Hebrew, Greek, and English, and perhaps even in other modern languages - which is pivotal in one's relationship to the issue at stake in the ecumenical quest for "visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship. In the Hebrew it is 'amehn; in the Greek it is amēn, and in the English, Amen.

That which is conceived by Rome as the "ultimate sign and seal" of church unity is realized by saying, "Amen." "In this way," they say, "you profess your belief in the presence of Christ in the eucharistic bread and wine as well as in his Body, the Church." However, there is another, "Amen." The root in the Hebrew, 'MN, involves truth, and expresses belief. It was said of Abraham, "He believed ('mn) in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:6) Abraham said "Amen" to God.

In the final issue it will be simply, to whom and to what you say, "Amen." Will it be "the mystery of iniquity," or the "mystery of Godliness"? Each claims to be a manifestation of Christ, one in a wafer, the other in the flesh. The Roman Church speaks of the Eucharist as "Jesus' paschal mystery." Paul writes of another "mystery" being "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27) If as claimed that the presence of Christ is in the consecrated wafer, then by partaking, is it not Christ in you? Are we transformed by a liturgical act or by the working of the Spirit of truth? Is it through showy ceremonies that a man is transformed, or by the still small Voice speaking to his heart?

Rome speaks of the Eucharist as a "bloodless" sacrifice which the priests offer continually but it cannot make the comers there unto perfect. There is only one sacrifice for sin by which men are perfected. Basic in this whole ecumenical thrust is the doctrine of righteousness by faith; is it by faith or by liturgy? The doctrine of the incarnation: did Christ come in the flesh, or did He come so far removed from man that He must now come in a wafer?

Step by step, we can be drawn toward Rome, and to him who abode not in the truth, or step by step, we can be drawn to the God of truth (Isa. 65:16; Heb. 'amehn) through Him who is the way, the truth and the life. It is so simple. Just say, "Amen." BUT say it to the right Person!

So Much In Common - a publication of "Documents of Interest in the conversations between the World Council of Churches and the Seventh-day Adventist Church," co-authored by Dr. B. B. Beach and Dr. Lukas Vischer of the Faith and Order Secretariat of the WCC. The Adventist Laymen's Foundation has exclusive rights to its publication and distribution. You may obtain a copy for \$4.00 postpaid by writing to the Foundation at P. O. Box 69, Ozone, AR 72854.

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Of Interest - The Assyrian Church and the Vatican are set to heal their 1500-year rift according to the Ecumenical News International. Separated in A.D. 431 in a theological dispute about the person of Christ, they now plan to restore "full communion" between themselves. The agreement does not call for "one church." Each church will keep its identity and faith, and maintain its own leadership, "but the faithful of each church would be able to receive communion from the other church's priests." The agreement signed on November 11 will not immediately restore "full communion" but will establish a theological committee "to remove impediments to communion." The Assyrian Church is a member of the World Council of Churches. (ENI 94-0117) Will the decisions reached in the removal of "impediments" serve as a pattern for unity on the celebration of the Eucharist by all?

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