

*"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)

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Editor's Preface

When the Accord between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics was first released, an editorial in Christianity Today noted it as "historic" and perceived it as calling "for universal religious liberty and world evangelization." (May 16, 1994) In a recently televised series, Dr. John Ankerberg indicated that this Accord had been "circulated widely inside the Vatican and was received with great enthusiasm." In this issue, we continue our analysis of another essay from the book, Evangelicals & Catholics Together, written by Dr. Mark Noll to justify the Accord. He approaches the topic from an historical perspective.

In the previous issue, we printed an exchange of letters in which Mr. George Weigel recommended Vatican Council II's "Declaration on Religious Freedom" as evidence as to how far the Roman Catholic Church has advanced in their thinking since Leo XIII. We pursue this suggestion in the article, "Things Are Not As They Were?" It should cause one to pause and think twice in noting the actual position set forth in the Declaration.

As one reads the documented material certain words and phrases keep reoccurring. The re-phrasing of "the American experiment" from "religious liberty" to "religious freedom," and if "liberty" is used, it is "ordered liberty" should cause us to ask, just what is being advocated? Another term also keeps reoccurring - "diversity." In the Accord itself, this term is limited by the adjective, "legitimate," and the declaration - "There is a necessary connection between visible unity of Christians and the mission of the one Christ." Other words and phrases need to be carefully considered - "the common good," "the moral order," "just legislation" by "civil authority" so as "to safeguard religious freedom... in an effective manner."

A few paragraphs are being devoted to the on-going "partnership" or "merger" (depending upon who is doing the writing) between the medical facilities of Adventists and Catholics in Colorado. There is more to come.



E & C T - 4

Dr. Mark Noll, the author of the third Essay in the book, Evangelicals and Catholics Together, is professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College. In his Essay he discusses "The History of an Encounter" between Roman Catholics and Protestant Evangelicals. First, we must ask, where is Dr. Noll coming from? This past year Christianity Today (CT) featured a forum on the evangelical mind. (August 14, 1995) Noll had written a book, The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind in which he "decried the anti-intellectualism he saw in modern evangelical life." (p. 21) This sparked a debate in the evangelical community. At this forum, each of the participants was asked how he would "characterize the current state of the evangelical mind?" Noll responded first. He said:

"I am most concerned about the widening gap between the evangelical populace and the evangelical academy. Every popular forum I have attended that has discussed The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind has been dominated by the most rigid kind of six-day creationism. I'm not sure where this is coming from, and I do not know exactly what it means. But I think its elevation to the status of dogma is crippling to the Scriptures and demeaning to the Christian tradition." (ibid.)

This same point he emphasized, with another, when inducted in 1993 as McManis Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College. His talk was titled the same as the book he was to write. In this induction talk he declared that "we would be deluding ourselves if we thought that evangelical thinking in our day has progressed very far." He cited two books, written by historians at the University of Wisconsin. Noll noted that one by Dr. Ronald Numbers, Creationists "explains how a popular belief deceptively known as 'creationism' - a theory that the earth is 10,000 or less years old - has spread like wildfire in our century from its humble beginnings in the writings of Ellen White, the founder of Seventh-day Adventism, to its current status as a gospel truth embraced by tens of millions of Bible believing evangelicals and fundamentalists around the world." (CT, Oct. 25, 1993, pp. 29-30)

The second book by Dr. Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, discusses the prophetic beliefs held by evangelicals and fundamentalists. Then

Noll concludes:

"These books share in common the picture of an evangelical world almost completely adrift in using the mind for the sake of Christ and the Scriptures. They describe Christians who think they are honoring the Scriptures, yet who interpret the Bible on questions of science and world affairs in ways that fundamentally contradict the deeper, broader, and historically well-established meanings of the Bible itself. (ibid., p. 30)

In this conclusion, Noll misses two very fundamental points. If the Bible is not true in its statement of human origins, it is not true in its statements regarding redemption. The same Divine Author spoke both. The One who came to redeem is declared to be the One who created. (John 1:3) The second point - the revelation of prophecy - is vital. Prophecy describes how God views human events. While it is true that much unwarranted speculation has become the hallmark of many, if not most, evangelical writers on prophecy, this still does not justify the abandonment of the significance of prophetic revelation. Noll having placed his mind in this mold, became a candidate to endorse the Statement of Accord between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. He ignores what the Bible says about the "man of sin." This is a worst "scandal" than Noll is trying to correct.

Noll begins his Essay building on a theme echoed by J. I. Packer - "Things are not as they were." By this he means that Roman Catholicism is not what it once was, and that the Accord itself indicates "a sea of change in a once stormy relationship." His Essay is an historical review of what was once the relationship between the two religious forces; what has caused the change; and the basis for the present status.

Concerning the past, Noll writes - "Once upon a time - in fact, within the living memory of many people who are still very much alive - Catholics and evangelical Protestants regarded each other with the greatest possible suspicion." (E&CT, p. 82) He observes that "by midcentury, the grosser forms of religious hostility that had prevailed widely throughout much of American history were subsiding." (p. 83) Yet, even at that point in time (1945), the Presbyterian fundamentalist, Carl McIntyre, could be quoted as declaring that "without any doubt the greatest enemy of freedom and liberty that the world has to face today is the Roman Catholic system." A few years later, the Protestant church historian, Wilhelm Pauck, observed that "the difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism is so

profound that it seems almost impossible to recognize them as two forms of one Christianity. (ibid.)

Noll cites the reaction to President Truman's attempt to appoint an ambassador to the Vatican in 1946. Loud protests greeted the announcement all along the Protestant spectrum so much so that the appointment had to be withdrawn. Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, president of the Federal Council of Churches criticized the move as "encouraging the un-American policy of union of church and state" pursued by Rome. The Roman Catholics also reacted to Protestant ecumenical activity. When the second General Assembly of the World Council of Churches met at Evanston, Illinois, in 1954, Cardinal Samuel Strich of Chicago issued a pastoral letter forbidding priests to attend even as reporters. Noll concludes - "In sum, on the very eve of Pope John XXIII's pontificate and, one might add, of the American presidential election of 1960 [Nixon v. Kennedy], there seemed no particular reason to expect a quantum leap in Protestant-Catholic goodwill." (p. 84)

Dr. Noll asserts that "four major factors" have contributed to the changed climate between Catholics and Evangelicals, and why that change has been so dramatic:

1) "The most visible public signal of a shift in the United States was the election of a Catholic as president in 1960." (p, 93) Kennedy's "scrupulous record on church-state matters, particularly his opposition to government aid for parochial schools, silenced many critics who feared that Catholics did not have proper national priorities." (p. 94)

2) The elevation of Cardinal Angelo Roncalli as Pope John XXIII advanced the ecumenical movement. He sent observers to the 1960 Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi, and established a Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. He convened Vatican II Council. This Council's Decree on Ecumenism commended this work to the bishops everywhere in the world. The result was the beginning of a series of dialogues between Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Church as well as several major Protestant denominations. Noll indicates that the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue "has produced the richest fruit, with a series of agreements on the Nicene Creed, baptism, the Eucharist, and, most importantly, justification by faith."

3) The Vatican II Council's "Declaration on Religious Freedom" was so worded to dispell historic

evangelical fears of Catholic tyranny. [This is an area that demands more study and definition of terms used in the present discussion of the Accord between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. Does "religious freedom" mean the same as what has been known in America as "religious liberty"?]

This change in the civic sphere was also accompanied by increased political action on the part of Evangelicals. This has developed into the Religious Right. Noll observes - "Over the last several decades, contemporary political affairs have become so tangled that Christian beliefs and public stances on moral issues now collide in nearly every conceivable combination." Then he adds - "The complex controversies surrounding three American fundamental social concerns - sex, national defense, and the economy - have contributed a great deal to the withering of old interreligious antagonisms." (p. 95) The end result is that Catholic conservatives and Evangelicals have found themselves arguing from the same side on the issues in dispute.

4) The fourth factor, Noll terms "a theological breakthrough." He maintains that the dialogues between Roman Catholic theologians and Protestant counterparts have distinguished between "religious stereotypes" and "genuine theological disagreement." He again cites the Catholic-Lutheran Accord document on Justification by Faith. "The document spoke **not** of 'uniformity' on the substance of the doctrine of justification, but about 'a convergence' on the meaning of the doctrine."

Again we have what could be called - "those tricky words," such as "uniformity" and "convergence." It needs be recalled that Cardinal Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, at the Seventh Assembly of the WCC in Canberra, declared - "We are **not** working towards **uniformity** among the churches of the world. We are working towards the **unity** in faith and in communion." (The Catholic Leader, Feb. 24, 1991, p. 3) Is "convergence" the objective of the "unity" desired?

Then again, the term, "convergence," was used in connection with "diversity" in the introduction of the release of the Lima Text of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC released in 1982. It read - "In leaving behind the hostilities of the past, the churches have begun to discover many promising **convergences** in their shared convictions and perceptives. These **convergences** give assurance that despite much **diversity** in theological expression the churches have much in common in their understanding of the faith." (Paper #111,

p. ix; emphasis supplied)

There is, however, another word used in the WCC Paper #111 which needs to be noted. The same preface observes:

"As demonstrated in the Lima text, we have already achieved a remarkable degree of agreement. Certainly we have not yet fully reached 'consensus' (consentire), understood here as that experience of life and articulation of faith necessary to realize and maintain the Church's visible unity. ... Full concensus can only be proclaimed after the churches reach the point of living and acting together in unity." (ibid)

Is this "concensus" rather than "convergence" what Cassidy meant when he said the Roman Church was working toward "the unity in faith and in communion"? Then there is George Weigel's statement in his Essay which spoke of "constructing political community amidst luxuriant diversity." (E&CT, p. 49) These terms which permit various interpretations tend to mute, for the present, Rome's objectives. Here again, the "sure word of prophecy" can help clarify the picture. The second "beast" of Revelation 13 ultimately speaks "as a dragon." (13:11) Further, it is an "image" to the first "beast" which is empowered to issue a "death" threat. (13:15) Is this ultimate picture a "unity in diversity," a "convergence," or a "consensus"? Or are these some "nice" expressions to veil an "ugly" future?

Noll continues his historical Essay by noting some reasons for the "Catholic-Protestant Reengagement." Within "liberal" Protestant thinking there has been a denial of such basic Christian concepts as the virgin birth of Jesus Christ; so much so, that Carl McIntyre, who could in 1945 aver that the Roman Church was the greatest enemy of freedom and liberty in the world, could by 1969 state, "I'm much closer to the Catholics in my belief in the Virgin Birth than I am to liberal Protestants who deny it." The charismatic movement within Catholicism which began in 1967 has furthered unity with its Protestant counterparts.

Another phenomenon cited by Noll is the changed attitude toward the Bible. "Catholics currently may read the Living Bible and the Good News Bible, both produced under Protestant auspices, with the imprimatur and nihil obstat. Catholic scholars sit on the revision committee of the Revised Standard Version, and Protestant purchasers swell the sales of the Catholic Jerusalem Bible." It is a Roman Catholic group - the Sacred Heart League - which has set records in the distribution

of the Scriptures. In 1979, they ordered 775,000 copies from the American Bible Society, and in 1983, they ordered another 800,000. (E&CT, p. 98)

Two about faces have also served to bring the Evangelicals and Rome closer together. One is Billy Graham's ecumenicism. Noll observes that Graham in 1960 "just barely" succeeded in "hiding his apprehensions about a Democratic regime that would not only include a Catholic president, but a Catholic majority Leader in the Senate, and a Catholic Speaker of the House." By 1978, "he became the first Protestant leader to be entertained by the abbot of the shrine of the Black Madonna in Czestochowa, Poland. In 1981 he sought and was granted an audience at the Vatican by John Paul II, who short years before as Cardinal Karol Wojtyla had made it possible for Graham to preach in Catholic churches during his evangelistic tour of Poland." (ibid., p. 99)

The second turn around was the Roman Catholic attitude toward Martin Luther. From Catholic reaction in 1953 to the movie, Martin Luther, calling Luther "a lewd satyr whose glandular demands were the ultimate cause of his break" with Rome, to 1983 when during the celebrations of the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth, the pope appeared in Rome's Evangelical Lutheran Church on December 11th. This was a remarkable volte-face. During the mid-1950s, Chicago Catholics sought to keep the Luther film off local television, while in 1983, "the Notre Dame alumni magazine devoted much of one issue, including an attractive cover portrait, to a discussion of 'What Martin Luther Means to Us.'" (p. 100) However, the haunting question remains - Has Rome really changed?

One of the issues which has produced much negative Evangelical reaction to the E&CT Accord is the matter of proselytizing - that of Evangelicals seeking converts from Roman Catholics. This issue has become severely acute in Central and South America. The Accord condemns such activity, and Noll seeks to defend this condemnation. He recognizes that Evangelicals should be spelled, "evangelicals," as there is no formal organization to which Evangelicals must answer. They are spread across a large spectrum of various religious bodies from Anglicans to Pentecostals. He cites a British historian, David Babbington, which assigns "four marks" as the criteria of evangelicalism - "conversionism, activism, biblicalism, and crucicentrism" (focus on the Cross of Christ as the means of salvation). Then Noll notes a Canadian survey with criteria more detailed than Babbington's. This survey in-

licated that of the 15% which could be identified as "evangelicals," a full one third were Roman Catholics.

Quoting Roman Catholic theologians that "there are sometimes sharper divisions within the Roman Catholic Church than there are between certain Catholics and certain Protestants, Noll concludes:

"Given the situation of religious pluralism within the Christian families, there is much more opportunity now than fifty years ago to find meaningful fellowship across, as well as significant strife within, traditional evangelical and Catholic communities." (p. 105)

So what about the proselytizing question? Noll writes against this backdrop of pluralism declaring:

"The pluralism with Catholic and evangelical communities also poses genuine problems for the practice of evangelism. Most responsible Catholics and evangelicals recognize that it is at best dubious, and at worst simply wrong, for Catholics and evangelicals to proselytize across the Catholic-Protestant border in situations where believers are coming close to the finest standards of either faith." (pp. 105-106)

Noll concludes his Essay with some interesting observations which need to be carefully analyzed:

1) "The contemporary world needs to hear more about what Catholics and evangelicals share in common than about their legitimate disagreements."

2) "The cobelligerence of Catholics and Protestants fighting together for the basics of the creed is nowadays more important [than discussion of individual doctrines]" (p. 107)

We need to ask ourselves - Are these conclusions valid? If not, then how shall we respond to them? And - the answer must be founded on the sure Word of God.

The last paragraphs of the Essay, cite European viewpoints as to the key for unity. Noll quotes with approval the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey's suggestions based on the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism. Carey, when principal of Trinity Theological College in England, wrote in his book, A Tale of Two Churches:

"The decree suggested that closer agreement among Christians is possible if we think in terms

of a hierarchy of truths. What the decree is getting at is this: unity is often marred by the attention given to our differences, but not all doctrines have the same importance for faith. Could we arrive at an understanding of the common core of the faith we share while allowing freedom with respect to other teachings less essential?" (p. 160)

Is this what is meant by speaking about "unity in diversity"? Is this not the concept for unity in the Community of Adventism being advocated by the Adventist Review? However, is this the unity which flows from the truth as it is in Jesus? These questions must be answered by each one individually, and each needs to know why he so answers. ‡

Updating AN Update

The Board of Trustees for the Colorado Adventist-Roman Catholic Health partnership is composed of fifteen members. The "chairperson" is a Roman Catholic doctor. The "vice chairperson" is Elder Charles Sandefur, now president of the Mid-America Union Conference. Of the other thirteen members, ten are Roman Catholics, two are Seventh-day Adventists, and one is a doctor from Porter Hospital staff but not a Seventh-day Adventist. One of the Catholic members is a doctor from (SDA) Avista hospital staff. Somebody was "asleep at the switchboard" when this selection of trustees was made.

David Algeo, Denver Post Business writer, in an article dated January 24, 1996, announced the new name - Centura Health - which combined the Sisters of Charity Health Services of Colorado and Porter-Care Adventist Health System. He noted that the name chosen "came as a disappointment to James Hertel, publisher of the newsletter Colorado Managed Care." Hertel "jokingly had suggested the company call itself Porter Sisters." This would have been truer to fact.

Hertel continued by noting that "these mergers of large numbers of health-care organizations into single groups, and the creation of large numbers of regional and statewide service areas,... have sought to select generic names, which diminishes their local identity." Whose "identity" will be lost in this merger? No guess work needed to answer this question. ‡

"THINGS ARE NOT WHAT THEY WERE?"

Mark Noll in his Essay had used J. I. Packer's comment - "Things are not as they were!" - as his theme. We chose this same quote to caption this article but with changed punctuation. It alters what appears to be, into suggesting the reality of what is.

The late Arthur S. Maxwell, then editor of The Signs of the Times, was ecstatic over what he observed at the Vatican II Council. In a report given to the University Church at Loma Linda, on his "Impressions of Vatican II," he began his sermon by saying - "First the friendliness of the welcome. You see, I've been there several times - that is - Rome. Always a sort of iciness there, but not any more, **not any more**. ... (emphasis his)

"Then, another aspect of this new friendliness was the pope's opening speech.... It was a beautiful speech. This was the opening of the final session. Do you know what his subject was? Love. ...

"The whole thing was a picture of the church loving humanity. Now, we've got to adapt our thinking a bit. There was no condemnation here of Protestants, no suggestion of a persecution of anybody, but love, unfeigned love for everybody - the separated brethren and people who don't belong and all people of all faiths and religions. Very, very wonderful change and a very, very significant change, and I will mention it, of course, later."

Maxwell did, by noting a question which he had been asked since his return from the Council - "Is the Catholic Church sincere in its declaration of religious liberty?" His answer was:

"This is such a tremendous change that the Roman Catholic Church has embarked upon... It's an amazing thing that the church has done to set itself alongside Protestants in declaring that every man has the basic human right to choose his own religion and follow the dictates of his own conscience." (Present Truth, #3, 1968)

Did the Vatican II Council do so? Its document, Dignitatis Humanae ("Declaration of Religious Liberty") issued 7 December, 1965, stated:

"The Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. Freedom

of this kind means that all men should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups and every human power so that, within due limits, nobody is forced to act against his convictions nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his convictions in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in associations with others. ... This right of the human person to religious freedom must be given such recognition in the constitutional order of society as will make it a civil right. ... (Chapter I, sec. 2)

"It is through his conscience that man sees and recognizes the demands of the divine law. He is bound to follow this conscience faithfully in all his activity so that he may come to God, who is his last end. Therefore, he must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters. The reason is because the practice of religion of its very nature consists primarily of those voluntary and free internal acts which cannot be commanded or forbidden by any merely human authority." (ibid., sec. 3)

Noll, in his Essay, avers that it was the American bishops' influence at Vatican II which secured these statements in behalf of civil liberty. However, Vatican II cannot be divorced from the context of time. Communistic governments still dominated Eastern Europe restricting Roman Catholicism. The words of this Declaration speak to this issue, not to an acceptance of the American way - the separation of church and state.

A preface was placed on this declaration. It is the "fine print" of what the Roman position really is. It reads:

"The sacred Council begins by professing that God himself has made known to the human race how men by serving him can be saved and reach happiness in Christ. We believe that this one true religion continues to exist in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to whom the Lord Jesus entrusted the task of spreading it among all men... All men are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and his Church, and to embrace it and hold on to it as they come to know it.

"The sacred Council likewise proclaims that these obligations bind man's conscience. Truth can impose itself on the mind of man only in virtue of its own truth, which wins the mind with both gentleness and power. So while the religious freedom which men demand in fulfilling their ob-

ligation to worship God has to do with freedom from coercion in civil society, it leaves intact the traditional Catholic teaching on the moral duty of individuals and societies towards the religion of the one Church of Christ." (ibid., Sec. 1; emphasis supplied)

Are things now not as they were, or are things just as they were? ‡

LET'S TALK IT OVER

As we near the close of the Century and the Sixth Millennium of time, we have anew the same test as was faced by Eve in Eden. The serpent said to Eve - "Yea, hath God said, ..." (Gen. 3:1) Finally, "when the woman saw that it was good,,, pleasant to the eyes, and... to be desired..., she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." (3:6) Sin came by seeing, and responding to what seeing said.

Into the redemptive process, God placed faith, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1) This faith, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), and by which victory is achieved (I John 5:4) comes by hearing - "hearing the word of God." (Rom. 10:17)

Through the ever increased visionary allurements of television and the video, men are being conditioned by what they see. "The man of sin" is "the Holy Father." Religious liberty is seen as "ordered freedom," a "civil right" and not an inalienable right of man.

If we continue to be beguiled by what we see, in the final confrontation, we will accept the offered "fruit" and eat, instead of standing by the truth of God as revealed in His WORD. Well has it been written - "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict." (GC, p. 593)

It will not be what we see that will constitute the right way, but what is not seen, what God says, for "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isa. 60:2), yet they will perceive themselves to be walking in light. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." (Matt. 6:23) "Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness." (Luke 11:35)

FATIMA - "Pope Paul VI, in his 1967 encyclical, Signum Magnum, identified the Lady of Fatima as the biblical representation of the Woman clothed with the sun." (The Thunder of Justice, p. 88) Have you carefully read Rene Noor-bergen's last book - The Fatima Factor in the Final Hours? It is available from the Foundation office for US\$10.00 plus \$3.00 postage.

[Brother Noorbergen had begun work on a follow-up book - The Vaticanization of Jerusalem - when called to rest last August.]

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If things with Rome are still as they were, you need to know where Rome really stands on Religious Liberty. Read - Facts of Faith. US\$10.00 plus \$3.00 postage from the Foundation.

[Both The Fatima Factor and Facts of Faith can be ordered together for US\$20.00 postpaid through to July 1, 1996]

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