

Nearing the End —

Evangelicals and Catholics Join Ranks

“This is a wave of the future. It is as significant a coalition to the future of American politics as the unification of Blacks and Jews during the civil rights struggles.” That was what Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian coalition, told the *Wall Street Journal* on April 4.

The morality crisis in America is rapidly deepening under the leadership of Bill and Hillary Clinton. And the most active Protestants in the nation—the Evangelicals—are understandably frightened.

Yet it will be the Evangelicals who will lead the way in obtaining passage of an iron-fisted National Sunday Law. That act will be done by shrewd political maneuvers, compromises, and alliances.

A powerful basis for that forthcoming event was laid on March 29, 1994. This is the story of what took place.

The declaration, entitled “*Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*,” was initiated in September 1992 by Charles Colson, of Prison Fellowship, and Richard John Neuhaus, a Catholic priest of the Institute on Religion and Public Life.

This astounding agreement cuts through the separation made when Martin Luther pounded those nails into the church door at Wittenburg nearly four centuries ago. **The segment of modern Protestantism which is the most politically and socially active has made peace with Rome!**

Just as predicted in *Great Controversy* over a hundred years ago, the agreement, while sidestepping differences, was based on those points of belief on which they could find agreement.

The signers of the 25-page document do not claim to speak officially for their various denominations, but they are still extremely important Protestant thought leaders. Included among them

are Pat Robertson, Charles Colson, the director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, and others. On the Catholic side, many priests led by Cardinal John J. O’Connor, of New York, signed the document.

Commenting on the historic document, Chuck Colson said, “We have differences, but on the ancient creeds and the core beliefs of Christianity we stand together. Christianity is besieged on all sides—by a militant nation of Islam and by the aggressive secularism of Western life.”

James Wallis, one of Robertson’s associates, said it this way: “Forty key Evangelical and Catholic leaders signed a statement at the Institute on Religion and Public Life in New York City, on March 29, 1994, urging their followers to accept each other as Christians, put aside differences and contend for common civil causes.”

Here we have the leading Protestant spokesmen of America, meeting together in a New York Catholic organizational headquarters, to sign a document of unity,—and declaring that “on the ancient creeds and the core beliefs of Christianity we stand together,” and we should “put aside differences and contend for common civil causes.”

The document declares that all professed Christians are members of the “one church of Christ.”

Spokesmen for this gigantic Protestant/Catholic coalition say that it was last year’s New York City school board election which proved that the two religious groups could work together politically for a common cause—and win.

The school board had become a battleground for control of the schools, after the introduction of the “*Rainbow Curriculum*,” which promoted a homosexual lifestyle and was required reading throughout the city’s schools.

Joint meetings of top religious leaders were held, and it was agreed that Catholic elements, Hispanic groups, Black organizations, and Jewish

people, would unite with Evangelical Protestants in a vigorous fight for control of the New York City school board. At stake were 288 unpaid school board seats in the nation’s largest city. They found that, working together, they could succeed in achieving their political objectives.

Cardinal John J. O’Connor allowed the distribution of the voter guides in the Catholic archdiocese of New York in an unprecedented joint Catholic/Protestant/Jewish action. The guides were distributed in more than 2,000 churches, including 300 Catholic churches and 500 African-American and Hispanic churches.

Leading the opponents, the People for the American Way, led a coalition of atheists, liberals, gays, abortionists, and feminists. It was a full-scale battle, and it was waged in one of the most secular cities in the U.S.

Yet the Protestant/Catholic coalition was able to elect 51 percent of their candidates on the ballot.

This powerful coalition is again at work on a project to win certain elections in Pennsylvania. (The archdiocese of Philadelphia has agreed to distribute 350,000 voter guides provided by the Christian coalition in five Pennsylvania counties.) The outcome of all this will not only be success stories, but hard-earned lessons in how to take over politics, win elections, and control legislative decisions.

With such success already in their pocket, it is now envisioned that, working together, Protestants and Catholics can bring morals and religion back to America. But think not that they only have the United States in mind.

The authors of the document estimate that there are one billion Catholics worldwide and 300 million Evangelicals. They believe they can work together all over the world for common causes.

Yet their concerns, ultimately, will go beyond mere political objectives.

They want to bring the Christians of the world together: "This statement lays the groundwork for moving forward in a spirit of cooperation," declared Pat Robertson. "I am lending my support because I believe it's imperative that we work to bring the body of Christ together."

The signatories of the document included leading Protestants and Catholics. The Protestants included Dr. Bill Bright (Campus Crusade for Christ), Dr. Os Guinness (Trinity Forum), Dr. Richard Mouw (Fuller Theological Seminary), Dr. Mark Noll (Wheaton College), Dr. James Packer (Regent College, BC), Dr. Richard Land (Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention), Dr. Jesse Miranda (Assemblies of God), and Dr. John White (Geneva College and the National Association of Evangelicals).

Catholic signers included Robert Destro (Catholic University of America), Keith Fournier (ACLJ), Dean Nathan Hatch (University of Notre Dame), Michael Novak (Crisis), and Cardinal John J. O'Connor (archdiocese of New York).

Looking over the above list, it is quite obvious that, for the most part, the signatories were Protestant and Catholic heads of subsidiary organizations. In this way, the laity in the churches could not as easily object. It is obvious that denominational leaders went along with this signing, while using full and semi-independent leaders to represent the denominations.

It is estimated that there are 52 million American Catholics and 24 million Evangelicals. (However, the present writer has seen statistical evidence that Catholic agencies heavily over-report on the size of their membership. Bloated statistics give them a more powerful political leverage than they deserve.)

The stated ultimate objective is "securing civil virtue" and eliminating "human sinfulness." In light of the clear-cut predictions in *Great Controversy*, what does that mean to you?

Although the wording is cautiously stated, the objective of the union is clear: to bring the people back to morality, as defined by commonly held Protestant-Catholic beliefs.

"*We Contend Together*" is the name of the core of the document. It is an urgent call for unity of action on key issues "for the right ordering of civil society. We embrace this task soberly; knowing the consequences of human sinfulness . . . To propose that securing civil virtue is the purpose of religion is blasphemous. To deny that securing civil virtue is a benefit of religion is blindness."

To meet a rapidly approaching secular takeover by means of governmental actions,—and changing it to a restoration of religion to the land; this is the aim.

"Americans are drifting away from, are often explicitly defying, the constituting truths of this experiment in ordered liberty. It is increasingly the case that wherever government goes religion must retreat, and government increasingly goes almost everywhere."

"As in times past, so also today and in the future, the Christian mission, which is directed to the entire human community, must be advanced against formidable opposition . . . 'We are contending . . . against . . . the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness.' "

This March 1994 document sets on paper an ongoing Protestant-Catholic relationship that has been strengthening for several years. It has been the anti-abortion (and, to a lesser extent, the anti-pornography) battles which have brought them together.

Commenting on this new basis for powerful future unified action, Pat Robertson said this: "The moral crisis facing society today and the obvious social breakdown mandates a closer cooperation between people of faith. The time has come where we must lay aside minor points of doctrinal differences and focus on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Great Controversy declares that such agreements would also include Protestant concessions. As usual, Rome was careful to obtain concessions from Protestants before it signed the agreement.

David Howard, immediate past international director of the World Evangelical Fellowship, said he was troubled by the intimation in the document that

all Catholics were off-limits to evangelization by Protestants, and that Evangelical converts should be sent to Catholic churches. The document specifically calls on Christians everywhere to combat the "widespread secularization" that denies Christ in "our so-called developed societies."

Recognizing that the churches have "communal and ecclesial separations" which are "deep and longstanding," the document states that those differing points "may never be resolved short of the kingdom come." But the various groups promise to work together for Christ.

Ten points of difference were named, including baptism, Scripture, Mary, apostolic succession, and the priesthood of believers. But the document promises that they will work together to bring the churches more fully together.

Nine objectives which they want to achieve in society were mentioned. One includes "A free society with a vibrant market economy, based on Christian understanding of human freedom."

You can know that a "vibrant market economy" would include a Sunday rest day, so they could work all the harder at the vibrant market economy the other six days of the week.

"I really do think it is a historic moment," said John White, president of Geneva College and former president of the National Association of Evangelicals. "I don't know of any other time in history when these two communities have . . . spoken together."

Secularism has apparently gained the upper hand in America, yet, as the present writer predicted in December 1990 (just after the presidential election), the Evangelicals would powerfully respond to the forthcoming liberal attempt at takeover.

As the *Wall Street Journal* put it: "A reaction from this country's religious tradition was inevitable. It has arrived."

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