

Biblical Unity or Papal Conformity?



By Michael de Semlyen and Richard Bennett

Papal Penitence

On Sunday, March 12, 2000, the first Sunday of Lent, the Pope presided over a solemn ceremony called "The Day of Pardon" in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, in which he asked God for forgiveness for the historical wrongs of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). The ceremony was presented as another profoundly significant event in the RC Church's "Millennium Jubilee Holy Year" and a further step, unprecedented but necessary, in the process of unity. It was a modern media event staged for maximum impact to encourage "unity". The impression given is that it is a genuine attempt to wipe the slate clean and to apologize for the past wrongs of the Church.

Careful examination, however, shows that the Pope's "Day of Pardon" was in fact not an apology, but rather a day of deception. In this service, the Pope continually prayed, purportedly as a Christian, while never admitting any of the horrendous sins of the Church of Rome. An egregious example from the prepared text that was used is found in Section III, "Confession of Sins Which Have Harmed the Unity of the Body of Christ".¹ The set prayer of the representative of the Roman Curia was as follows, "Let us pray that our recognition of the sins which have rent the unity of the Body of Christ and wounded fraternal charity will facilitate the way to reconciliation and communion among all Christians." This was followed by silent prayer, and then the prayer of "The Holy Father" addressed to the "Merciful Father",

Merciful Father, on the night before his Passion your Son prayed for the unity of those who believe in him: in disobedience to his will, however, believers have opposed one another, becoming divided, and have mutually condemned one another and fought against one another. We urgently implore your forgiveness and we beseech the gift of a repentant heart, so that all Christians, reconciled with you and with one another will be able, in one body and in one spirit, to experience anew the joy of full communion. We ask this through Christ our Lord."

If the Pope and the Roman Curia were really serious about their prayer offered to Holy God, they must face the fact that condemning curses of their Council of Trent were not mentioned nor repented of, including the condemnation of the Biblical Gospel and historical biblical Christianity,

which led to the wholesale slaughter of millions of Christians during the 667 years of the Inquisition, and which have never been revoked, Vatican Council II notwithstanding. If this prayer were answered, it would be necessary to dismantle the RCC with its false gospel, papal infallibility, and "irreformable"² ways, which clearly the Pope and his Curia have no intention of doing.

"The Week of Christian Unity"

The gathering of mainstream churches at St. Paul's Basilica in Rome earlier this year is thought to have been the largest assembly of Christian leaders with a Pope since the Vatican Council II in the early 1960s. On January 18th, the Tuesday of the week which had been designated 'The Week of Christian Unity' in the 'Holy Year, 2000', leaders representing four fifths of Eastern Orthodoxy gathered alongside Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and Pentecostals. They were participating in celebration of the opening of the 'Holy Door at St. Paul Outside the Walls'. Archbishop George Carey, Primate of the Church of England, and Metropolitan Athanasius, representing Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople and head of the Orthodox Church, knelt on either side of Pope John Paul II before the newly opened door. Only one cushion had been provided as it was thought that only the Pope would kneel, but when they both fell to their knees, too, the Pope called out, "Unity! Thank you!" It was a highly symbolic moment.

The Pontiff had every reason to express his gratitude to the Churches represented and the two men flanking him. After all, in May 1999, the joint Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) had issued a statement "recognizing the Pope as the overall authority in the Christian World" and describing him as "a gift to be received by all Churches", (a gift yet to be accepted by the Synod of the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion, however). Five months later in October, 1999, on Reformation Day, the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches had signed a joint declaration announcing that their opposing views on justification have been reconciled.³ With this declaration of reconciliation and unity, the way seems clear for the Lutherans to join the Anglicans in accepting Papal primacy. The frosty relationship of earlier years with the Russian Orthodox Church has warmed up, and a Papal visit to Moscow and a meeting with Patriarch Alexy II is being discussed. Pentecostals and Charismatics have accelerated their Rome-ward journey and Evangelical leaders who have signed ECT ("Evangelicals and Catholics Together") have led very large numbers of Evangelicals to kneel before the open "holy" door that the Roman Catholic Church offers them.

The Pope's words that day were couched in the language associating equality with freedom. Carefully concealed in his response was the non-negotiable agenda of the Roman Catholic Church, for rather than looking for unity based on truth, the Papacy, as ever, is seeking to secure conformity through compromise. The "ecumenical dialogue" referred to by the Pope during the January 18th ceremony, is clearly governed by a special set of rules. Vatican Council II's postconciliar Document No. 42 on ecumenism states that "...dialogue is not an end in itself...it is not just an academic discussion."⁴ Rather,

"ecumenical dialogue...serves to transform modes of thought and behavior and the daily life of those [non-Catholic] communities. In this way, it **aims at preparing the way for their unity of faith in the bosom of a Church one and visible.**"⁵

That the papacy expects this process of dialogue to take time to accomplish its stated aim of bringing all Christian churches under its authority is clear when she says,

"...little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesial communion are overcome, **all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist [the Mass] into that unity of the one and only Church.**...This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something we can never lose."⁶

The "little by little" approach of the Vatican II document are now giant steps.

How many present at the January 18th gathering understand what is really happening? The Pope's official position is that "ecumenical encounter is not merely an individual work, but also a task of the [RC] Church, **which takes precedence over all individual opinions.**"⁷ Thus the opinions of others present on January 18th are "individual opinions" and worthless. The final goal of any dialogue with the RCC is, first and foremost, "unity" in a visible and specific ritual. Under the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, "all Christians will be gathered, **in a common celebration of the Eucharist** into that unity of the one and only Church...unity we believe dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose." She could hardly state it more clearly.

Unity: True and False

Very different from this man-made spurious unity is the true unity of believers in Christ. The foundation of Christian unity is the position of believers *"in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ."*⁸ The Lord's prayer in John 17:21 for unity is answered in the life of an individual who is justified by God's saving grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for unity means that unity of believers is actual. God, the Father of His people, Who before the world existed chose the believers to be in Christ His Son, justified them through His righteousness, and upon saving them, places them in Him, and will preserve them in that unity unto the culmination of all things. Believers are placed into the unity which is in Christ Jesus, a unity which they themselves did not establish, but which they are commanded to maintain. In the words of the Apostle Paul, they are *"to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*⁹

True Ecumenism

The same Apostle shows clearly the ground of true unity. *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*¹⁰ Believers, therefore, who adhere to God only

and His Written Word, as did the Lord and the Apostles after Him ('Sola Scriptura') are one in body, in Spirit, and in truth. They are saved before the all-Holy God by grace alone ('Sola Gratia'), through faith alone ('Sola Fide'), and in Christ alone ('Solo Christo'), and all glory and praise is to God alone ('Soli Deo Gloria'). These five biblical principles together show the foundation of true unity in the Lord. They have helped the persecuted church through the centuries to hold fast to the simplicity of the Gospel. True ecumenism is fellowship or working together in adherence to the five basic biblical principles that maintain the foundation of true unity in the Lord. To the degree to which these key basic biblical standards are embraced, true unity will be evident.

False Ecumenism

On the other hand, false ecumenism, typically institutionalised, is the joining together for common causes of professing Christian groups, when in fact one or more of the parties involved are unconverted. While purporting to confess the Lord Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures, for the most part the five biblical principles that display the basis of true unity in the Lord are compromised. The extent to which these principles are not upheld usually shows the inclination of the church or group to submit to Rome.

The World Council of Churches is such an institution. Within it, there is no agreement on any of the five principles that demonstrate the fact that the foundation of true unity is in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. The Pope and his Church, likewise in apostasy from the true Gospel, are also without any of the five biblical standards. Counterfeiting the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are intent on finding successful ways to bind all to the very visible, active and attractive pontifical throne.

Pope Defines Conformity

In his official letter, "That they May Be One", the Pope defines full unity,

"The Catholic Church, both in her praxis and in her solemn documents, holds that the communion of the particular Churches with the Church of Rome, and of their Bishops with the Bishops of Rome is, in God's plan, an essential requisite of full and visible communion."¹¹

To arrive at that point of full unity, a different set of five principles must be adopted—principles that actually deny all five parameters of biblical truth. According to the Pope, "It is already possible to identify the areas in need of fuller study before a true consensus of faith can be achieved:

- (1) the relationship between Sacred Scripture, as the highest authority in matters of faith, and Sacred Tradition, as indispensable to the interpretation of the Word of God;
- (2) the Eucharist, as the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, an offering of praise to the Father, the sacrificial memorial and Real Presence of Christ and the sanctifying outpouring of the Holy Spirit;
- (3) Ordination, as a Sacrament, to the threefold Ministry of the episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate;

- (4) the Magisterium of the Church, entrusted to the Pope and the Bishops in communion with him, understood as a responsibility and an authority exercised in the name of Christ for teaching and safeguarding the faith;
- (5) the Virgin Mary, as Mother of God and Icon of the Church, the spiritual Mother who intercedes for Christ's disciples and for all humanity."¹²

The Pope's objective in declaring his five principles is that a ubiquitous visible conformity to the Church of Rome should be forged in accordance with and manifested through her institution alone. Thus the Pope decrees,

"...it is now necessary to advance towards **the visible unity** which is required and sufficient and which is manifested in a real and concrete way, so that the Churches may truly become a sign of that full communion in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church **which will be expressed in the common celebration of the Eucharist.**"¹³

The RCC is attempting to forge a man-made unity, visible by means of an institution to which all must conform. Such a conception stands in direct contradiction to the reality of believers who, having been placed invisibly in Christ by God, are to maintain the bond of unity given them by the Holy Spirit.

External Unity to be Attained by Power and Penalty

What is this conformity now so passionately advocated by the Pope? How would it be applied in practice? From all previous experience, and the official teaching of the same Pope in his Canon Law, those fully participating will be obliged to submit their faculties of both mind and will to 'the Holy Father' [the Pope], to his decrees, and to the dogma of his Church. Thus present day Roman law decrees,

Canon 752 "A religious respect of intellect and will, even if not the assent of faith, is to be paid to the teaching which the Supreme Pontiff or the college of bishops enunciate on faith or morals when they exercise the authentic magisterium even if they do not intend to proclaim it with a definitive act..."

In this official law Rome enunciates, in clearer terms than any cult states, the necessity of suppressing one's God given faculties, that of mind and will. This is not only demanded, the new Canon Law, the 'Papal Code' codified by the present Pope, includes a section entitled "Punishment of Offenses against Ecclesiastical Authorities and the Freedom of the Church". Under the heading, "The Punishment of Offenses in General", the Inquisition appears again as from old times, for Canon 1311 states,

"The Church has an innate and proper right **to coerce** offending members of the Christian faithful by means of penal sanctions."¹⁴

A brief acquaintance with history readily reveals that coercion is a term that the Roman Church understands very well. Naturally, when ushering all comers into her big tent, she makes light of its implications; but when once again in direct control of the levers of political power (which may well be

provided by the fast advancing European super state), Canon 1311 could acquire that same notoriety as those that have so darkened the pages of history.

It is important to remember always that the Roman Papacy is an absolute monarchy and also a secular government. Enormously wealthy, it has territorial sovereignty, its court, nobles, and diplomatic corps; its detective force and secret service; its laws, advocates, and system of jurisprudence as well as prison; taxes, bank, foreign treaties and concordats, enormous political influence, ambitious plans and policies, all as much as any secular kingdom. And it still has the Inquisition, now styled the Office of the Doctrine of the Faith, headed by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.

Bride of the Lamb Understands Apostate Church

Believers of old were clear to call the Roman Catholic Church's imposed conformity "Satan's seat" or the Antichrist. This was known and spoken of even through the Middle Ages by Dante Alighieri (d. 1321), John Wycliff (d. 1384), John Huss (d. 1415), Savonarola (d. 1498), and William Tyndale (c. 1536). So Rome's conformity was described as Antichrist from the time of Reformation by Martin Luther (d. 1546), Nicholas Ridley (d. 1554), John Bradford (d. 1555), and John Foxe (d. 1587), and in more recent times by Isaac Newton (d. 1727) and Jonathan Edwards

(d. 1758). Now as the "Holy" Roman Empire revives in the European Superstate, can believers afford to remain ignorant of both history and Biblical prophecy as understood throughout the centuries? Confident believers of old saw that unity is in Christ and, consequently, warned of the conformity with Rome. They both knew the true church in Christ, and recognised the apostate Church in Rome. Understanding that unity with the Roman Catholic Church always meant submission to her traditions and finally obedience to her Pope, they rejoiced that their unity was in the Beloved, rather than dallying with sin.

Pope Identified

Extravagantly, apparently without trembling, the Pope has again fulfilled the Lord's prophetic Word (II Thessalonians 2:3-12) depicting the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition. The sitting Pope purports to take for himself a Divine position. Thus in Section III of the prepared program for the "Day of Pardon", "The Holy Father" is mentioned eight times. Nonetheless in the RCC, this title does not denote the All Holy One in heaven, but rather the sitting Pope. Seen in the light of Scripture, the RCC Pope who claims to be Christian, clearly is one "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (v. 4). The Pope of the RCC goes further when by taking to himself the title of "The Vicar of Christ", he presumes to take the place of Christ Himself, teacher, shepherd, and priest. This also is clearly tantamount to "as God sit[ting] in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." The assertion is not simply made, for the Pope's law gives it teeth in exacting submission of mind and will and promising punitive action against those who fail to obey, as Canon 752 and 1311 document. He is the worst and greatest enemy of Christ who under the

pretence of service to Christ, presumes to undermine His unique offices by covertly usurping His position and power.

C. H. Spurgeon clearly understood these things. His timely words still apply,

Since he was cursed who rebuilt Jericho, much more the man who labours to restore Popery among us. In our fathers' days the gigantic walls of Popery fell by the power of their faith, the perseverance of their efforts, and the blast of their gospel trumpets; and now there are some who would rebuild that accursed system upon its old foundation. O Lord, be pleased to thwart their unrighteous endeavours, and pull down every stone, which they build. It should be a serious business with us to be thoroughly purged of every error which may have a tendency to foster the spirit of Popery; and when we have made a clean sweep at home we should seek in every way to oppose its all to rapid spread abroad in the church and in the world.¹⁵

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1 www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/jubilevents/events_day_pardon

2 "This infallibility, however, with which the divine redeemer wished to endow his Church in defining doctrine pertaining to faith and morals...the Roman Pontiff...enjoys...when...he proclaims in an absolute decision...For this reason his definitions are rightly said to be irreformable by their very nature..." No. 28, Lumen Gentium, in Vatican Council II The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Austin Flannery, Ed., 1981 ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publ. Co., 1975) p. 380.

3 See Richard Bennett's analysis, "The Roman Catholic-Lutheran 'Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification': A Denial of the Gospel and the Righteousness of Christ".

4 Flannery, No. 42, "Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue", S.P.U.C., 15 August 1975, p.549.

5 Ibid., pp. 540-1. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.

6 Ibid., p. 541.

7 Ibid., p. 545.

8 1 Thessalonians 1:1.

9 Ephesians 4:3.

10 Ephesians 4:4-6.

11 Ut Unum Sint, "That They May Be One: On Commitment to Ecumenism", John Paul II (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference) Publ. No. 5-050, Para. 97.

12 Ibid., Para. 79.

13 Ibid., Para. 78.

14 Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983).

15 Morning and Evening, on Joshua 6:26

An Overview of the History of the Papacy – By Richard Bennett



Because of the fascination of the world with the office of the Pope and his power, it is important to study the topic historically and in the light of Biblical truth. This article is an overview of the history of the Papacy from its inception to rule of Pope John Paul II. A biblical analysis of the basis on which the Office of the Papacy claims to be the Rock of Matthew 16:18 is found on our Webpage: www.bereanbeacon.org

Early church at Rome

The church at Rome was in the beginning a community of brothers and sisters, guided by a few of the brothers. The four Gospels and letters of the Apostles settled the great questions of doctrine. A pompous title and position of one man lording it over the others did not exist, as such is forbidden by the Holy Scriptures. The lives of the believers and the doctrine taught were in accord with the Lord's words, *"One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."*¹ The Scriptures, however, warned that from the midst of the brotherhood would arise a power that would attempt to destroy the Gospel and the simple brotherhood of believers. This was nowhere more graphically

fulfilled than in the rise of the Office of the Papacy out of the church that had been established in Rome.

Gradual rise of Papal Rome

The respect enjoyed by the various Christian elders in the second century was roughly proportionate to the rank of the city in which they resided. At that time, Rome was the largest, richest, most powerful city in the world, the queen of the Imperial Roman Empire. If Rome was the queen of cities, why should she not be the one to have a bishop to be the king of bishops? Thus, even when pagan Rome fell to the barbarian nations, some of the political esteem that she had won from the nations of the earth remained. The Barbarian overthrow of the Western Roman Empire was succeeded by the gradual rise of Papal Rome. Gradually, bishops from different parts of the empire, seeing themselves as above ordinary elders, yielded to the bishops of Rome some portion of the honor similar to that which the world gives to a prince. From this approbation, the Bishops of Rome began to demand submission as the third, fourth, and fifth centuries passed. In these centuries also, as the true Gospel was watered down, there came in its place the growth of ritualism in the churches, in which true worship of God and the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit was replaced by ceremonialism and idolatry. Pagan practices took on a veneer of Christianity. The clergy-laity division of the people of God became the accepted base. This further devolved into a hierarchy of the ruling clergy. By the end of the fifth century, the early ministers of the Gospel, who had taught the Scripture, had become replaced by a sacrificing priesthood in which the priest presumed to mediate between God and men. The church was no more the fellowship of believers under Christ Jesus, but rather an institution dominated by a hierarchy, with the most powerful individual being the Bishop of Rome.²

Bishop of Rome becomes the Pope

The power of the Bishop of Rome ascended as the imperial power of the Emperor declined. Edicts of the Emperor Theodosius II and of Valentinian III proclaimed the Roman bishop "as Rector of the whole Church." The Emperor Justinian, who was living in the East in Constantinople, in the sixth century published a similar decree. These proclamations did not create the office of the Pope but from the sixth century there was such advancement of power and prestige that from that time the title of "Pope" began to fit the one who was Bishop of Rome.³

Fraudulent documents aid rise of Papacy

It was not until the middle of the eighth century that serious contentions were made claiming the transfer of power and authority from the Emperor Constantine to the Bishop of Rome. The *Donation of Constantine* was purported to be the legal document in which the Emperor Constantine donated to Sylvester, the Bishop of Rome (314-335), much of his property and invested him with great spiritual power and authority. The vastness and splendor of the inheritance allegedly given by Constantine to Sylvester in the spurious document is seen the following quotation from the manuscript,

"We attribute to the See of Peter all the dignity, all the glory, all the authority of the imperial power. Furthermore, we give to Sylvester and to his successors our palace of the Lateran, which is incontestably the finest palace on the earth; we give him our crown, our miter, our diadem, and all our imperial vestments; we transfer to him the imperial dignity. We bestow on the holy Pontiff in free gift the city of Rome, and all the western cities of Italy. To cede precedence to him, we divest ourselves of our authority over all those provinces, and we withdraw from Rome, transferring the seat of our empire to Byzantium; inasmuch as it is not proper that an earthly emperor should preserve the least authority, where God hath established the head of his religion."⁴

The *Donation of Constantine* was probably forged a little before A.D. 754. Of it, Wylie says, "In it Constantine is made to speak in the Latin of the eighth century, and to address Bishop Sylvester as 'Prince of the Apostles, Vicar of Christ'. During more than 600 years Rome impressively cited this deed of gift, inserted it in her codes, permitted none to question its genuineness, and burned those who refused to believe in it. The first dawn of light in the sixteenth century sufficed to discover the cheat. In the following century another document of a like extraordinary character was given to the world. We refer to the Decretals of Isidore. These were concocted about the year 845. They professed to be a collection of the letters, rescripts, and bulls of the early pastors of the Church of Rome...The writer, who professed to be living in the first century, painted the Church of Rome in the magnificence which she attained only in the ninth, and made the pastors of the first age speak in the pompous words of the Popes of the Middle Ages. Abounding in absurdities, contradiction, and anachronisms, it affords a measure of the intelligence of the age that accepted it as authentic...It became the foundation of the canon law, and continues to be so, although there is not now a Popish writer who does not acknowledge it to be a piece of imposture."⁵

As early as 865, Pope Nicholas drew from these forgeries a way to demand submission from bishops and princes. The arrogance of the popes grew from this time onward. Popes became intoxicated with their own pride; some in their teens and twenties lost their senses in drunken immorality.⁶ The infamous women of history, Theodora and Marozia, for many years governed the papal throne. That unholy See, pretending to rise above the majesty of kings and bishops, was sunk in the dregs of sin. Theodora and Marozia installed and deposed at their pleasure those who sat in the pretended chair of St. Peter. For two centuries, the Papacy was one wild arena of disorders as the most powerful families of Italy disputed and fought over it like a possession.

Lusts of the mind

The year 1073 was a turning point from the centuries of gross immorality. Rigorous discipline filled the papacy. Reaching above the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of papal minds began to clutch at the things of God. Pope Gregory VII, the noted Hildebrand, ambitious beyond all who had preceded him, took to

himself the idea that the reign of the Pope was but another name for the reign of God. He resolved never to rest until he had subjected all authority and power, both spiritual and temporal, to the "chair of Peter". Hildebrand's successors continued his project, and strove by trickery, by arms, by crusades and by anathemas, to place the world under the scepter of the papal throne. For two centuries from the time of Hildebrand's reign, the papacy increased in power and glory, and was maintained by thousands of destroyed lives, many deposed kings and princes, many sacked cities, and many fields deluged with blood.

Popes Innocent III (1216) and Boniface VIII (1303) put the final touches to Papal triumph in spiritual and temporal power. Seventy-five popes, one after another, from Pope Innocent Pope Pius VII, approved of torture, murder, and burning at the stake, and the confiscation of property of believers in the horrific centuries of the Inquisition.⁷ Many of those slain were true Bible believers.

"The most ghastly abomination of all was the system of torture. The accounts of its cold-blooded operations make one shudder at the capacity of human beings for cruelty. And it was decreed and regulated by the Popes who claim to represent Christ on earth. In 1252 Pope Innocent IV solemnly authorized it. Confirmatory or regulatory decrees about it were issued by Alexander IV, Clement IV, Urban IV and Clement V."⁸

The Papacy had become "*drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.*"⁹ No other kingdom or power has ever drunken so deeply of this blood as had Papal Rome. Thus as streams are traced to the fountain, so is the Papacy traced to the prophecies of Scripture, which correctly interprets the Papacy. This is "*the same horn [that] made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.*"¹⁰ "*And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*"¹¹

The Papacy and Modern Times

A partial list of the successes of the Papacy under Roman Catholic dictators in twentieth century includes: Adolf Hitler in Germany, 1933-1945; Benito Mussolini in Italy, 1922-1943; Francisco Franco in Spain, 1936-1975; Antonio Salazar in Portugal, 1932-1968; Juan Peron in Argentina, 1946-1955; Ante Pavelic in Croatia, 1941-1945; and Engelbert Dollfuss and Kurt von Schuschnigg in Austria, 1932-1934. The Vatican's legal agreement with those nations is well known; few, however, see the Nazism of Germany and the Fascism of Italy, Spain, Portugal, Croatia, and Latin America as consequences of the Papacy's economic and social teachings, and legal agreements between the Vatican and these nations.¹² The Crusades and the 605 years of the Inquisition have stopped, but the power of the Papacy to influence and to control governments, social, economic, political life and the destinies of peoples, has continued.

Power through law

What had looked like a mortal wound to Papal power took place in 1798.¹³ A general of Napoleon's army entered the Vatican, removing Pope Pius VI from his throne; and so it was that Popedom lost its basis as a civil power. Pope Pius IX, not having territorial or civil power, sought to re-establish the Papacy. An internally important part of his design brought about the declaration of Papal infallibility. With remarkable ingenuity against not only the Scriptural absurdity of the concept, but also in spite of the historical fact of heretical popes, this was made doctrine at Vatican Council I in 1870. Further, the Papacy re-established itself internally by re-organizing Roman Catholic law into the 1917 *Code of Canon Law*.¹⁴ The apparent mortal wound of 1798 was to be healed in 1929 when under Mussolini, the Vatican was again recognized as a civil power and seated on all seven hills. The concordat with Mussolini was just the beginning of many civil concordats, one of the most infamous being that between Pope Pius XII and Adolf Hitler.¹⁵ The Papacy had again consolidated its power from within by the 1917 *Code of Canon Law* and from without by legal concordats with the various nations. Thus the Vatican, with its own citizens as part of sovereign nations across the world and with her civil agreements with the same nations, has a double cord of power. The individual Catholic, fearing for his salvation, and laden with his first allegiance being to "holy Mother Church" is a pliable pawn in the hand of the Papacy.¹⁶

The major change of direction made visible by Vatican Council II (1962-1965). That council moved from separation from other religions to false ecumenism, not only with the religions of the world, but also with Bible believers in particular. "Separated brethren" was a new term for those always considered heretics, while the pagan religions of Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism now became accepted ways to God.¹⁷ This new approach was established by the RCC to win the world to herself by means of dialogue, the rules and goal of which she has carefully spelled out in her post-Conciliar Document No. 42 on ecumenism, which states that "dialogue is not an end in itself...it is not just an academic discussion."¹⁸ Rather, "ecumenical dialogue...serves to transform modes of thought and behavior and the daily life of those [non-Catholic] communities. In this way, it **aims at preparing the way for their unity of faith in the bosom of a Church one and visible.**"¹⁹

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"...little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesial communion are overcome, **all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist [the Mass] into that unity of the one and only Church....**This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something we can never lose."²¹

Pope John Paul II, while initially having been thought to be liberal and modern, consolidated further the dictatorial powers afforded him by the 1917 Code of Canon Law and by his purported infallibility, bequeathed him by Vatican Council I. This he did by revising the 1917 Code, making it even more conservative than it had been, and has been careful to appoint new bishops in line with his centralized way of thinking.

Like another Hildebrand, John Paul II is determined to build, by both Church and civil law, the structure by which the Papacy can again at the appropriate time wield might and power among the nations.²² This same Pope John Paul II has been adamant in his efforts to update the laws of the Roman Catholic Church. Since the days of Hildebrand, popes have seen the necessity of making iron and inflexible church laws before attempting to control her subjects and those not Catholic by compulsion and violence, if necessary. In 1983, John Paul II's revision of the 1917 *Code of Canon Law* added to the Roman Catholic laws, for example, "The Church has an innate and proper right to coerce offending members of the Christian faithful by means of penal sanctions."²³ Examination of these laws shows them to be even more absolute and totalitarian than those of the past. If one rejects submission of his intellect and will to the Pope, or some of the other laws of the Papacy, Canon 1371, Para. 1 states that "The following are to be punished with a just penalty: 1 a person who...teaches a doctrine condemned by the Roman Pontiff..." Canon 1312 outlines specified penalties that are to be carried out, "Para. 2. The law can establish other expiatory penalties which deprive a believer of some spiritual or temporal good and are consistent with the supernatural end of the Church." The perverse vindictiveness of these laws contravenes the repeated Scriptural commands to be not despotic, as are the rulers of this world. From the creation of the Papacy in the sixth century, its heart has been that of law and force. Grace and the Gospel have been superseded by decrees and coercion. A veneer of Christianity has always been upheld, yet this surface ritual religion has always repressed and persecuted true godliness. The history of the Papacy shows that unequivocally it is a power structure built on forgeries, craft, persecution, a false gospel, church law, civil power, and concordats. Nonetheless, the Papacy for most of its history has succeeded in deluding millions. Present day Catholicism continues to insist that its Papal Office is of God, and the world for the most part bows down before her shrine and her Christ, the Pontiff himself.

References

1. Matthew 23:8.
2. See J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, originally published in 1878 (Kilkeel, N. Ireland: Mourne Missionary Trust, 1985) Vol. I, Book I, pp. 3-14. See also J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century*, A New Translation (New York: John B. Alden, Publisher, 1883) Book I, pp.1-34.
3. D'Aubigne, Book I, p. 81.
4. Quoted from copy of the document in Pope Leo's letter in Hardouin's Collection, Epistola I., Leonis Papae IX; Acta Conciliorum et Epistolae

Decretales, tom. 6, pp. 934; Parisiis, 1714. The English reader will find a copy of the pretended original document in full in Historical Essay on the Power of the Popes, Vol. II, Appendix, Tr. from French, London, 1838

5. Wylie, Vol. I, p. 29-30. See also Roman Catholic historian Ignaz Von Dollinger, The Pope and the Council, Auth. Tr. from German, 2nd ed. (London: Rivingtons, 1869) Sect. 7 "Forgeries", pp. 94-142.

6. Peter De Rosa, Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1988) p. 47-56.

7. De Rosa, p. 175.

8. William Shaw Kerr, A Handbook on the Papacy (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Ltd., 1950) p. 239.

9. Revelation 17:6.

10. Daniel 7:21.

11. Revelation 13:7.

12. For fuller documentation of this see John W. Robbins, Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church (Unicoi, TN 37692-0068: The Trinity Foundation, 1999) ISBN: 0-940931-52-4.

13. "Edward King, insightful in 1800 wrote about this defeat as the mortal wound or end of Pontifical Power, "THIS IS THE YEAR 1798.—And just 1260 years ago, in the very beginning of the year 538, Belisarius put an ed to the Empire, and Dominion of the Goths, at Rome...He had entered the City on the 10th of the preceding December, in triumph, in the name of Justinian, Emperor of the East: and had soon after made it tributary to him: leaving thenceforward from A.D. 538 NO POWER in Rome, that could be said to rule over the earth,□excepting the ECCLESIASTICAL PONTIFICAL POWER." Remarks on the Signs of the Times (Philadelphia ed., 1800) pp. 18-19 in LeRoy Edwin Froom, The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950) Vol. II, p. 767.

14. RC writer John Cornwell states, "At the turn of the century [1900], Pacelli [later Pope Pius XII]... collaborated in redrafting the Church's laws in such a way as to grant future popes unchallenged domination from the Roman center. These laws, separated from their ancient historical and social background, were packaged in a manual known as the Code of Canon Law, published and brought into force in 1917. The code, distributed to Catholic clergy throughout the world, created the means of establishing, imposing, and sustaining a remarkable new 'top-down' power relationship. As papal nuncio in Munich and Berlin during the 1920s, Pacelli sought to impose the new code, state by state, on Germany...." Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII (New York, 10014: Viking, 1999) p. 6.

15. Cornwell, p. 7 "In 1933 Pacelli found a successful negotiating partner for his Reich Concordat in the person of Adolf Hitler. Their treaty authorized the papacy to impose the new Church law on German Catholics and

granted generous privileges to Catholic schools and the clergy. In exchange, the Catholic Church in Germany, its parliamentary political party, and its many hundreds of associations and newspapers 'voluntarily' withdrew, following Pacelli's initiative, from social and political action. The abdication of German political Catholicism in 1933, negotiated and imposed from the Vatican by Pacelli with the agreement of Pope Pius XI, ensured that Nazism could rise unopposed by the most powerful Catholic community in the world..."

16. See RC author Cornwell and Presbyterian author Robbins.

17. No. 56, Nostra Aetate, 28 October 1965, Austin P. Flannery, Ed., Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1975, 1984).

18. Vatican 11 documents, No. 42, "Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue", S.P.U.C., 15 August 1975, p. 549.

19. Vatican 11 documents, No. 42, pp. 540-1. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.

20. Vatican 11 documents, No. 42, p.545.

21. Vatican 11 documents, No. 42, p. 541.

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