

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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BLEATING WOLVES

THE MEANING OF EVANGELICALS AND CATHOLICS TOGETHER

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When six of us started The Trinity Foundation in 1977, it was a shoestring operation. In many ways it still is. But God has blessed us tremendously, bringing to us his people who understand the importance and the uniqueness of our work and generously support it. I say the importance and uniqueness of our works, not because we intend to boast, but because we see no other group, organization, or publication in America promoting the system of ideas that we promote. Some groups have much of the truth, some have merely snippets, but all adopt ideas from human philosophy or from church tradition; or they garble the Bible's clear message of salvation; or they deny that there is a system of truth in Scripture; or they deny that the Bible has a systematic monopoly on truth; or they have an animus against Gordon Clark, and so they refuse to read his books and warn others not to read them. Whatever their error, what they produce is at best semi-Christian or sub-Christian, to put it charitably. At this point in church history, adulterated Christianity is impotent to stop or even to slow the world's descent into a new Dark Age.

What Luther and Calvin and their followers achieved in the sixteenth century, by the grace and power of God, was a full, consistent, bold, and accurate proclamation of the whole counsel of God.

They did it by asserting the foundational truths of the Scriptures clearly and consistently: The Bible alone is the Word of God; and justification is by means of faith alone in Christ's life, death, and righteousness alone, by grace alone. The Gospel of justification by faith alone filled their minds. Luther wrote: "Whoever departs from the article of justification does not know God and is an idolater. For when this article has been taken away, nothing remains but error, hypocrisy, godlessness, and idolatry, although it may seem to be the height of truth, worship of God, holiness, and so forth."¹ Calvin asserted, "Whenever the knowledge of it [justification by faith alone] is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the Church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown."²

¹ *What Luther Says*, Plass, editor. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959. Luther also wrote: "If the article on justification had not fallen, the brotherhoods, pilgrimages, masses, invocation of saints, etc., would have found no place in the church. If it falls again (which may God prevent!) these idols will return" (Martin Luther, *Works*, Jaroslav Pelikan editor. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965, volume 54, 340).

² "Calvin's Reply to Sadoletto," *Tracts*, I, 41; as quoted in J. Graham Milles, *Calvin's Wisdom*. Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992.

In the sixteenth century the Gospel turned the world upside down, just as it had in the first century after Christ, when the apostles and disciples preached throughout the Roman Empire. What we need today is another clear, bold, accurate, and consistent proclamation of Christianity. But some of the churches and parachurch organizations that ought to be standing shoulder to shoulder with us in this theological war are AWOL. Some of them, in fact, snipe at us from the rear. My files contain many letters from pastors and parachurch leaders who boldly attack us for our bold attacks (the irony is lost on them) on unbelief, error, and false teachers. Some of these correspondents have threatened everything from public humiliation to litigation to utter destruction. In 1988, one anonymous critic sicced the Internal Revenue Service on The Trinity Foundation for an audit that lasted eight years, an audit that resulted in one of our books – *Pat Robertson: A Warning to America* – being banned by the federal government. And some of the churches and parachurch organizations who ought to be fighting alongside of us in this theological war have defected, and they are now fighting for the enemies of Christ. Mr. Marvin Olasky, editor of *World* magazine, in which we advertised this Conference, attacked our ad in the October 10 issue, after the magazine had accepted both the ad and our money. He described our ad as “obnoxious,” “ornery,” “pointed,” and “baiting,” and the publisher, Mr. Joel Belz, who also happens to be chairman of the board of Covenant College, declared the ad “inappropriate” for *World* magazine. It seems that Belz’s and Olasky’s attack was precipitated by a few Roman Catholic readers who cancelled or threatened to cancel their subscriptions to *World*. Undoubtedly they had been attracted to the magazine by its subscription offers promoting the books of William Bennett, chairman of the Catholic Campaign for America. For *World*, revenue, not truth, is the bottom line.

The Trinity Foundation has *not* grown, need I say, because our books are bestsellers. They sell slowly but steadily, mostly by word of mouth. We sell more books to secular bookstores than to so-called Christian bookstores. As for gifts to the Foundation, no denomination, not even a single congregation, financially supports our work. Our annual budget is less than the reported salaries of some officers of the Presbyterian Church in America. Our only supporters are faithful Christian

families and individuals who understand the rampant apostasy of the times and oppose it. They will receive a great reward in Heaven for the help they have given us over the years. For twenty years, God has used them to give The Trinity Foundation the resources to publish more than 50 books, some in multiple editions, about 170 *Trinity Reviews*, dozens of audio tapes, and six tracts, some of which have been distributed by the hundreds of thousands. We have readers on every continent except Antarctica; we ship free books regularly to Africa, India, and Asia in response to Christians who write to ask us for them, and by the end of this year, God willing, we will have a major website, which will offer all our *Reviews* to everyone on the planet who has internet access. So despite the efforts of our adversaries, and the neglect of most churches, The Trinity Foundation has continued to grow.

Theology Wars

In the present theology wars, we ought to know who our allies and who our enemies are. As a Presbyterian, I have no sympathy with those deluded Presbyterians who seem to think it is worse to be a Baptist than it is to be a Roman Catholic or an Anglican; nor with those deluded Baptists who think that the Reformation is irrelevant and unimportant, because Baptists are allegedly not Protestants. As a Reformed Christian, I have no sympathy with the desire in some so-called Reformed circles to whitewash the priest-, flea-, and rat-infested Middle Ages; to cover up the Roman State-Church holocaust in the New World at the time of the conquistadors; or to be silent about the anti-Christian Roman State-Church herself. As a Christian, my sympathy is with the sixteenth century Reformers and with all those who preceded them during a thousand years of darkness in Europe, saints whose names we do not know, whose stories have been forgotten, whose memories have been deliberately obliterated by the hellish combination of ecclesiastical and political power that slaughtered them for their faith. Our allies today are those who understand the issues of the Reformation and believe those truths to be central and indispensable to the Christian faith. That means that Romanists are not our allies, nor are Arminians, nor liberals, nor modernists, nor neo-orthodox, nor neo-evangelicals, nor Anglicans, nor Charismatics, nor Pentecostals, nor most Lutherans, nor most Presbyterians, nor most Baptists. But God has his remnant, and if we are

faithful in proclaiming his Word, he will call and assemble his people through that proclamation, causing them to believe his truth. Our job is Isaiah's job: It is to speak truth to the remnant. If we were attempting to please men, we would not be servants of Christ.

In the midst of this rampant apostasy in the United States and rabid anti-Christianity worldwide, I want to discuss briefly what has brought us to the present situation, and where we may expect the future to take us. I have written extensively in *The Trinity Review* about one of the more recent and visible manifestations of apostasy in America, Evangelicals and Catholics Together. It is, as its leaders boast, part of the ecumenical movement – not the old ecumenical movement, which tried to unite church organizations while largely ignoring their creeds, but a new ecumenical movement that is far more dangerous. The new ecumenism wants to unite church organizations, to be sure, but it first wants to make it clear that there are no significant theological differences between the churches. In fact, its leaders seem to be convinced that, theologically, there isn't a dime's worth of difference between most Protestant churches and the Roman State-Church. And you know, in one sense, they are right. Today's Protestant churches are almost as corrupt and apostate as the Roman State-Church herself.

Charles Colson, one of the leaders of this new ecumenical movement, expressed his fundamental ecumenical idea in these words:

The pain and distrust between Catholics and Protestants goes [*sic*] back centuries. The church has often been plagued by wars within her walls, crippling her in her battle against the encroaching armies of secularism. But at root, those who are called of God, whether Catholic or Protestant, are part of the same Body. What they share is a belief in the basics: the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, His bodily resurrection, His imminent return, and the authority of his infallible Word. They also share the same mission: presenting Christ as Savior and Lord to a needy world.... It's high time that all of us who are Christians come together regardless of the differences in our confessions and our traditions and make common cause to bring Christian

values to bear in our society. When the barbarians are scaling the walls, there is no time for petty quarreling in the camp.³

Colson first asserts that "the church" has been crippled by wars within her walls. He says that Romanists and Protestants are part of the same church. What makes them part of the same body is their common doctrine, and Colson lists five fundamental doctrines held in common. Sometimes this point is made in a more scholarly way when someone asserts that Protestants have the early councils – the so-called ecumenical councils--in common with the Roman State-Church. Robert Zins has written an excellent analysis of one book by the Thomist Norman Geisler and Ralph E. Mackenzie that makes this contention.⁴ Whether stated in the popular way Colson says it, or more formally as scholars say it, this fundamental doctrinal unity between the systems of Romanism and Protestantism does not exist. Take, for example, the single issue of Scripture: Colson calls the common doctrine "the authority of His infallible Word." But what is common about it? Romanism and historic Protestantism have different Bibles; Rome says there are 73 books and a few fragments; historic Protestantism says there are 66 books and no fragments. Second, Rome says that she wrote the books of Scripture, and not only did she write them, she approves and authenticates them. Historic Protestantism says that the books of Scripture are prior to the church, they called forth and created the church; and they judge and authenticate the church. Third, Romanism denies the sufficiency, inerrancy, historical reliability, scientific accuracy, and clarity of Scripture; historic Protestantism asserts all these. Romanism and historic Protestantism have nothing in common on the doctrine of Scripture. Those who assert that they do – such as Charles Colson – simply display their ignorance of what both Rome and the Scriptures teach.

Furthermore, if one were to look at the rest of the so-called fundamental common doctrines, he

³ Charles Colson, "Foreword," *Evangelical Catholics*, Keith A. Fournier. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990.

⁴ See Robert M. Zins, *On the Edge of Apostasy: The Evangelical Romance with Rome*. Huntsville: White Horse Publications, 1998. Geisler's and MacKenzie's book is *Roman Catholic and Evangelical: Agreement and Diverences*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995.

would find similar divergences: The Bible says Christ was born of a virgin, but not a sinless, perpetual virgin who was bodily assumed into Heaven where she reigns as Queen of Heaven and functions as Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix. The historical mother of Jesus, a godly young Hebrew woman, and the Virgin Mary in Roman theology are different persons, just as the historical Jesus and the liberal Jesus are different persons. The Roman State-Church did not invent, but she enthusiastically adopted and perfected as her central theological method, the art of equivocation. The Jesuits then raised the art of equivocation to a science. As Christians, we must never be fooled by two people using the same words but ascribing different meanings to those words. We must never forget that the meaning of terms is determined by the system in which they appear. When Paul said in Athens, "In him we live and move and have our being," he was not asserting Greek pantheism, although he quoted a Greek. He did not sign a manifesto with the philosophers of Athens setting forth what they agreed on. Paul used the same Greek words as the pagans, but their meaning had changed, being determined by the Christian system of thought in which Paul placed them. Today there are many pious fools operating seminaries, churches, and parachurch organizations who have yet to learn that elementary point of language and logic. They think that because genuine Protestants use some of the same words as Romanists, or because Romanists use some of the same words as the Bible, that they are all talking about the same thing. They should be required to take a course in logic and to memorize the definition of "equivocation."

Colson goes on to say, after asserting that Protestants and Romanists have fundamental doctrines in common, that we should put aside the remaining minor doctrines and unite to fight secularism. Why Colson finds secularism a greater threat than false religions, I do not know. The greatest enemies of Christianity have always been false religions. It was not secularists who crucified Christ; it was false religionists. It was not secularists who persecuted Christians in the first century; it was false religionists. It was not secularists who ruined ancient Israel; it was false religionists. The ancient prophets denounced the false religions of their times. Quite frankly, friends, the eighteenth century Enlightenment did less harm to Christianity than Romanism or twentieth century

modernism. Colson, being a political animal, calls for a united front against the barbarians scaling the walls. He denies that the barbarians are already within the walls, that barbarians ruled and ruined virtually all the churches for a thousand years – and for the past 500 years, most of the churches professing to be Christian. If we are going to make alliances for political purposes, why should Christians not ally themselves with secularists to protect ourselves against the growing power of the Roman State-Church? But of course all such alliances – whether with false religionists or secularists – are forbidden by Scripture.

Had Charles Colson lived in the first century, he would have scolded Paul for criticizing and cursing the Judaizers. After all, the Judaizers agreed on most fundamental doctrines with the Galatians and even with Paul, and their help was needed to fight the pagan barbarians assaulting Western civilization. What was Paul thinking? Surely he should have agreed at least to a co-belligerency (to use the late Francis Schaeffer's phrase) with the Judaizers against the pagans. Instead, Paul cursed the Judaizers over some minor point of doctrine like justification and divided the fledgling and struggling church, even though the Judaizers believed in God, the deity of Christ, his birth of a virgin, his return to Earth, and the authority of the Scriptures. We have no reason to doubt that the Judaizers believed the fundamental doctrines that Colson says Romanists and Protestants have in common. Paul, judged by Colson's standards, was a divisive fool. Paul not only did not seek a co-belligerency with the Judaizers, he did not seek to co-evangelize the world with them. Paul missed the opportunity to construct a united front in the culture wars of his day. Had Paul done so, Western Civilization might have been saved and the Roman Empire might never have fallen to the barbarians scaling the walls. If we accept Colson's premises and argument, we must conclude that Edward Gibbon and the pagan Romans were right, and Augustine was wrong: The fall of Rome was indeed the fault of the Christians.

Had Charles Colson lived in the sixteenth century, he would have berated Luther and Calvin for their divisiveness in the face of the imminent threat from the Turk. In fact, the Reformers were repeatedly criticized for splitting Christendom when Islam threatened it. But Luther, Calvin, and Paul knew what is important, and what is important is not

a united political or social front – and certainly not a united theological front – against pagans and secularists; it is the Gospel. On truth – especially the truth of justification by faith alone – there can be no compromise, even if it means splitting churches. Until American Christians learn that lesson, we will continue our descent into the darkness of papal Rome.

Part of the immediate problem is that many so-called evangelical churches and leaders spent much of the mid-twentieth century separating themselves from those who preached separation from unbelief. The neo-evangelicals had such a horror of separation that they had to separate from the separationists. Carl Henry was one of the leaders of the neo-evangelicals. He and others wanted to lead a movement that would distance itself from fundamentalism, and neo-evangelicalism was born. This in turn led quickly to Billy Graham's acceptance of liberal churches as sponsors of his crusades in the 1950's, and in the 1960's, to acceptance of Romanist churches as sponsors of the crusades. What the Bible teaches on theological and ecclesiastical separation was ignored; and compromise, though under different labels, became the *modus operandi* of the neo-evangelicals. It was called cooperation – and who is anti-social enough to oppose cooperation? It was called engagement, and who is isolationist enough to reject engagement? It was called co-belligerence, a metaphor borrowed from war in which two parties fighting a third party do not fight each other. But the idea of co-belligerence – let alone the notions of cooperation and theological alliance – is itself a betrayal of Christ; it is abandoning theological warfare for cultural warfare. Co-belligerence involves deciding that Christians will neither criticize Romanism nor evangelize Roman Catholics (nor criticize Arminianism nor evangelize Arminians, nor criticize Judaism nor evangelize Jews), for example, because they are our allies in the Culture Wars against the secularists. But fighting Culture Wars is not the Great Commission; Scripture knows only Theology Wars, and in those Wars, *all* un-Biblical thoughts and institutions are the enemies of Christ. Making a separate peace with any one of them, as co-belligerency requires, is treason to Christ.

Some American churchgoers have become interested in these Culture Wars partly because of

the Cultural Mandate. In some circles the Cultural Mandate has been substituted for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the United States it has become the conservative counterpart to the liberal social gospel. (In Canada, the Cultural Mandate *is* the socialist gospel.) The Western civilization that Charles Colson and his ilk are attempting to save cannot be saved by the cultural gospel, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. Only the preaching of the Gospel can defeat those principalities and powers. As I explained in my essay "Civilization and the Protestant Reformation," Western civilization is a by-product of the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a by-product of the Reformation. Now, in the name of saving what is left of Western civilization, Colson and his ilk demand that we abandon the Reformation, make a theological, social, and political alliance with the Roman State-Church, and battle the barbarians scaling the walls. Mr. Colson is ill-educated. His many ghostwriters have not served him well. He neither understands the source of Western Civilization nor what is required to save it. Just as the individual's eternal salvation is entirely in the hands of Christ, so a civilization's temporal salvation depends entirely on Christ, and if his Gospel is ignored, disbelieved, or despised, as Colson and his tribe despise it, then Christ will surely and swiftly bring that civilization to an end. All power in Heaven and on Earth has been given to Christ.

It is clear that the movement in non-Catholic churches represented by Evangelicals and Catholics Together is a betrayal of the Reformation, the martyrs, the Gospel, and of Christ himself. If Charles Colson is right, Martin Luther and John Calvin ought to apologize to the pope. But while it is necessary to recognize spiritual treason for what it is, and to denounce it in no uncertain terms, denunciation is not sufficient. More important than denunciation is understanding: Why have contemporary Protestants abandoned the faith of their fathers and rushed to Rome? Books could be written on the subject; but all I can hope to do this evening is offer some thoughts that might serve as a basis for further discussion and elaboration.

The Etiology of Apostasy

Exactly what are the causes of the present apostasy? Such things do not happen in a vacuum, mysteriously and inexplicably, nor do they happen suddenly. The present apostasy of American

churches should have taken no one by surprise. It has been a long time coming. I want to discuss briefly this evening how the rejection of the whole counsel of God has played out over the past 400 years. The central theme, the dominant motif, of Christian theology since the time of the Reformation is a shift from the objectivity of Scripture to the subjectivity of the believer. This is similar to the development one finds in church history – so far as we know anything about it – from the time of the apostles to the Reformation. The great apostasy in the churches after the time of the apostles until the sixteenth century, when the pure Gospel of Christ burst forth again, and again turned the world upside down, has been repeated in the centuries since the Reformation. Many of the same movements of thought that appeared in the centuries following the first have appeared in the centuries following the Reformation. There is, however, a dominant motif that characterizes these movements of thought: This motif might be called a movement from objectivity to subjectivity, from theocentrism to anthropocentrism, from worshiping and serving the Creator, to worshiping and serving the creature. It affects various aspects of thought in different ways.

For example, in the field of epistemology, the theory of knowledge, the apostles taught that the Bible, the written Word of God, has a systematic monopoly on truth. *All* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are *hidden* in Christ. *All* Scripture is inspired and *completely* equips the man of God for every good work. Man by his wisdom *cannot* know God. In fact, man by his wisdom cannot know *anything*, as Ecclesiastes says. The Scripture shines as a light in a dark place.

But this systematic monopoly on truth, which is an objective, theocentric view, soon came under attack. Some of those churchmen who had been influenced by philosophy wanted to make room for philosophical ideas. Those who had been influenced by other religions wanted to make room for non-Biblical religious ideas and practices. The idea that there is more than one source of truth – variously called nature, reason, observation, experience, mysticism, feelings, philosophy – was accepted in many of the churches. This subjective idea developed in unsystematic ways until the thirteenth century, when Thomas Aquinas wrote his summaries of patristic theology in which he incorporated the philosophy of Aristotle. There the

notion that there are two or more sources of truth found its greatest expression in theology. Thomas made the same error Eve had made millennia earlier: Rather than adhering exclusively to the objective Word of God, he espoused the idea that sensation, observation, and experience are sources of truth. Man could discover truth on his own. Epistemology became anthropocentric, not theocentric.

Three centuries after Thomas, the first generation Reformers – Martin Luther and John Calvin, and even before them in the fourteenth century, John Wycliffe – taught that truth is objective, and that there is only one source of truth: Scripture. Echoing the apostles, Wycliffe had written, “All law, all philosophy, all ethics are in Scripture. In Holy Scripture is all truth.” Calvin wrote, “I call that knowledge, not what is innate in man, nor what is by diligence acquired, but what is revealed to us in the Law and the Prophets.” Luther stated his *Schriftprinzip*, his Scripture principle, many times. Here is a typical formulation from Luther: Scripture is “in itself most certain, most easily understood, most plain, is its own interpreter, approving, judging, and illuminating all the statements of all men.... Therefore nothing except the divine words are to be the first principles for Christians; all human words are conclusions drawn from them and must be brought back to them and approved by them.” Luther made Scripture the axiom of his thought, the first principle. When he was ordered to recant, his reply was, “Unless you can convince me by Scripture and plain reason, I will not and cannot recant.” Luther was not adding “plain reason” to Scripture, as a source of truth; he was merely asserting that logic is a part of Scripture itself, and unless his accusers could show him that he is wrong from Scripture and by reasoning from Scripture, he could not recant.

But the decline from the epistemological objectivity of the Reformers began almost immediately, just as it had after the apostles. During the Reformation itself, the Anabaptists, the Enthusiasts, who are sometimes regarded, mistakenly, as part of the Reformation, also rejected Luther’s *Schriftprinzip*, and taught that there were two sources of truth: the dead letter of Scripture and the living spirit of oral revelation. The dead letter of Scripture, of course, was objective, but the living voices and vivid visions in their heads were subjective. With such voices and visions, the

Enthusiasts needed no Scripture. Far from being part of the Reformation, the Enthusiasts were an eruption of Romanist mysticism in the sixteenth century. Like the Romanists, they too held to oral and written revelation, the oral taking primacy over the written. Their epistemological position was the same as Rome's, and was a denial of epistemological objectivity and *sola Scriptura*.

Tragically, second generation Reformers abandoned the view that Scripture has a systematic monopoly on truth and returned to the view of Rome, crystallized in Thomistic philosophy, that there are at least two sources of truth. Most did not follow the Enthusiasts (Enthusiasm reappeared later), but they did follow Thomas. Thomas Aquinas, who had been canonized by the Roman State-Church 50 years after his death, had taught that there are two sources of truth, sensation and revelation. Furthermore, Romanists, including Thomas, break revelation down into two types, in order to destroy completely, but not obviously, the only objective source of truth, the Scriptures: Revelation is both oral and written, Rome says, and the oral interprets the written. Protestants did not accept the Romanist distinction between oral and written revelation, but they did accept the Romanist notion that there are two sources of truth, one divine and one human.

This early rejection of epistemological objectivity and *sola Scriptura* led to many errors in both philosophy and theology. First, it precluded the Reformation from ever producing its own philosopher. It was not until the twentieth century that God took a young man from Pennsylvania and taught him some of the philosophical implications of the principle of *sola Scriptura*. His subsequent books developed that insight in ways that, had they been published 400 years earlier, might have changed the history of the world forever. But in the providence of God, the genius of Clark flared only as twilight was falling over the West, just before dark.

Second, this abandonment or rejection of epistemological objectivity and *sola Scriptura* in philosophy led to all sorts of philosophical movements that have paved the roads back to Rome. For example, if there is a source of truth outside of Scripture, then science, observation, experience, reason, feelings, other religions, common sense, philosophy, other inspired books,

or some yet undiscovered source might furnish us with truth. Once the objective Word of God was abandoned, a philosophical Pandora's Box was opened. Mystics – who of course had flourished during the Dark Ages – reported their visions of Mary, Jesus, God, and other beings. Theologians, relying on their own opinions, developed various sorts of natural theology. Philosophers developed various theories of epistemology in this epistemological pluralism that resulted from Thomas' philosophy. Scientists told us that men are evolved animals and developed their language from grunts and squeals. Consequently, men cannot express or discuss divine truth accurately. Therefore, Scripture itself is mythological. Since man is an animal, logic itself is suspect; it is merely a tool of survival; it is not the image of God in man, for man was not created, but evolved from lower life forms. Logic has no value as a tool either to discover truth or to explain truth, but is, at best, rationalization. Because no consistently Reformed philosophy developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the schools founded by Protestants used texts adulterated with non-Christian ideas. Those schools quickly lost their theological bearings because they had no consistently Christian philosophical foundations. They became theologically corrupt and apostate more quickly than the general Protestant populace, and through their students, they misled millions of ordinary Christians and churchgoers.

Third, in theology proper, the rejection of epistemological objectivity and *sola Scriptura* supported all sorts of theological speculation, leading to Deism and Unitarianism (since reason is a source of truth), to pietism and modernism (since feelings are sources of truth), to Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement (since revelation is oral and subjective, not confined to Scripture), and to neo-orthodoxy, since Scripture is paradoxical, mysterious, and cannot be understood by our finite minds. All these groups in the twentieth century became allies of Rome, because they all are opposed to epistemological objectivity and the Christian axiom of *sola Scriptura*. Rome has made accommodations for all sorts of subjectivists, from the evolutionists to the Charismatics, because she recognizes that they all reject the Biblical principle of *sola Scriptura*. They all reject the rock on which the church is founded, and the Roman State-Church accepts the devotees of each error so long as they acknowledge the authority of the papacy.

Ecclesiastically, the Reformation reached its zenith in the seventeenth century at the Westminster Assembly in London, the Assembly that drafted the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*. The *Confession* adopted the epistemological objectivity of the apostles and early Reformers: Its first chapter declares,

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men.

Both Enthusiasm and Romanism were rejected. The Bible possesses a systematic monopoly on truth.

A century earlier John Calvin had published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a work which is still, four and a half centuries later, the foremost comprehensive and systematic statement of Christian truth. Between those two dates, the life of Calvin and the Westminster Assembly, the errors of Arminius had surfaced and been condemned by the Synod of Dort in the Netherlands. Despite the Synod's denunciation, Arminius' errors, which were correctly recognized as a return to Romanist theology, prevailed in the churches started by the Reformation. Luther's *Bondage of the Will*, his devastating reply to Erasmus' Romanist theology in *The Freedom of the Will*, had been the manifesto of the Reformation. Tragically no synod, nor, as far as I am aware, any individual Christian, recognized the fundamental problem, which was an anthropocentric epistemology.

This rejection of objectivity and *sola Scriptura* led to all sorts of errant and heretical ideas in all other aspects of thought. In the theory of reality, called metaphysics, the sovereignty of God was denied by both the Roman State-Church and the Arminians. Not only could men obtain truth with their own free minds, they could obtain salvation with their own free wills. Here subjectivist religion ascribed independence from God to the will, as well as to the intellect. Pelagianism was the most blatant and consistent ancient statement of this view within the churches; after the Reformation,

first the Council of Trent and then, 50 years later, a theologian named James Arminius denied the sovereignty of God and asserted the independence of men. Arminius, a Dutch theologian (a word of advice to students here: don't trust Dutch theologians) of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, caused a division in the Reformed churches by his denial of the sovereignty of God in at least five respects. Arminius asserted that man is not totally depraved; that election is not unconditional, but depends on God's foreseeing certain acts of elected men; that the atonement is not definite and actual, but indefinite and potential, depending on man's will and decision for its efficacy; that saving grace is resistible by the free will of man; and that believers, exercising their free will, may lose their salvation and be eternally lost. Each of these positions is an attack on the sovereignty of God, and an assertion of the independence of the creature. Each is an attack on objectivity and theocentrism, and an assertion of subjectivity and anthropocentrism. Furthermore, all these ideas are found in Romanism. Arminius' heresies, though condemned by the Synod of Dort, swept through the Protestant churches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, caring them back to Rome's narthex.

Roman State-Church philosophy is a rejection of epistemological objectivity and *sola Scriptura*. Her theology is, at bottom, an attack on the sovereignty of God, and an assertion of the independence of the creature. Those basic anthropocentric principles are worked out in great detail in Roman theology, and they appear and reappear in a hundred different forms: They appear in the form of natural law theory, on which not only Romanist theology, ethics, and politics are based, but also much Protestant theology, ethics, and social thought is based; in the soteriological notion that in the Fall man lost only a *donum supperadditum*, a superfluous gift of righteousness that God had given him, leaving man, not totally depraved, but merely partially depraved, an idea that reappears in Arminianism; they appear in the notion that man can cooperate with God in his salvation; they appear in the notion that the sinner is justified, at least in part, by his personal righteousness,* they

* "By the early second century it is clear that Christians had come to think of themselves as being justified through being sanctified, accepted as righteous according to their actual obedience to the new Law of

appear in the notion that some sins are mortal, while others are not; in the notion that the bishops and priests can call the Second Person of the Trinity from Heaven and imprison him in a cracker; in the notion that the Roman State-Church has magisterial teaching authority; in the notion that the Roman State-Church dispenses divine grace; and in the notion that the Roman State-Church, because she represents God on Earth, rightfully possesses all power in Heaven and on Earth.

In historically Protestant churches Arminius' anthropocentric doctrines worked themselves out in many theological forms: His denial of the definite atonement of Christ and assertion that Christ died for all men without exception logically implied, no matter what Arminius or his disciples said, that all men would eventually be saved. This universalism led first to an assertion that all are saved, and later, to a denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment. As a consequence of Arminius' denial of the efficacy of Christ's atonement, Hell disappears, but Purgatory endures. It is the place, where, after death, men continue their good works and complete their redemption. Both Rome and Arminius teach that good works are essential to salvation, that salvation can be lost by not doing the right works, or by sinning just before one dies. In Romanism, this in turn led to the development of the plausible idea that there are venial sins, sins that are minor and do not deserve damnation, and mortal sins, which are major, and do deserve damnation. Although Arminians apparently never developed such a clear distinction, they achieved much the same effect by minimizing the sinfulness of sin, and restricting mortal sin to "known sin."

Repentance, which in the Bible means simply a change of mind, was transformed by the idea of free will and works, and became total surrender, and finally penance. Pastoral counseling became auricular confession, as counseling was first formalized and finally made mandatory. Once *sola Scriptura* was rejected in the early church, and again in the centuries after the Reformation, subjective sources of truth were asserted, and religious subjectivism became rampant. Having abandoned the objective Word of God as the rule of

faith and practice, it became necessary to manage the resulting religious chaos in the churches in some way. The substitute for the Bible that developed over the centuries was the Roman State-Church. Ecclesiastical power was concentrated first in the bishops, then in the bishop of Rome. Over the centuries, the bishop of Rome developed a bureaucracy, called a curia. This institution claimed to be infallible and usurped the role of teacher, which she called by its Latin name, the Magisterium. It is no accident that the Roman State-Church has claimed the titles Christ specifically forbade to men. She calls her priests Fathers, and she calls herself Teacher. These titles are a reflection of the complete anthropocentrism of the Roman State-Church, and her denial of the complete theocentrism of Christianity. Christ gave his command not to call any man Teacher or Father, as I am sure you recall, because there is only one father, and there is only one Teacher.

In the centuries since the Reformation, the shift from epistemological objectivity to epistemological subjectivity, from *sola Scriptura* to epistemological pluralism, has permeated all of theology. Efforts to control this religious subjectivism in Protestantism also took the form of the development of the power of bishops, as seen in Methodism, Lutheranism, and Anglicanism. Today we have the spectacle of Charismatics and Pentecostals adopting episcopacy as a remedy for disorder in their churches. Without the Word of God, rulers in both civil and ecclesiastical governments opt for authoritarianism and tyranny to end chaos and anarchy. Church order, in which the freedom of the Christian is protected, is founded on *sola Scriptura* – and it is that principle that the Roman State-Church and many lesser organizations have rejected.

The Prognosis of Apostasy

Given this theological and ecclesiastical deterioration for the past 400 years, which in many ways recapitulates the theological and ecclesiastical deterioration of the first centuries after Christ, we can now see that Evangelicals and Catholics Together and its counterparts in other churches – the Lutheran-Romanist accord, for example – are logical outcomes of the abandonment of the principle of *sola Scriptura*. They are not sudden and inexplicable developments; they are almost predictable. Having realized that there is very little of any theological

Christ" (Robert Webber and Donald Bloesch, editors, *The Orthodox Evangelicals*, 49). See also Thomas Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in The Apostolic Fathers*. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1959.

importance that distinguishes contemporary Protestant churches from the Romanist State-Church; having experienced the splendor of the Roman State-Church, the seductive beauty of her cathedrals, liturgy, and traditions; having recognized the political clout she wields not only from her large numbers and vast wealth, but also from her status as a political institution, many contemporary Protestant leaders are urging a theological alliance with Rome.

Barring an outpouring of the knowledge of God by the Holy Spirit, these trends will continue and possibly accelerate. After Evangelicals and Catholics Together and their Lutheran, Anglican, mainline Protestant, and Charismatic counterparts issue more statements and reach more concords, congregations, perhaps entire denominations, not just individuals, will join the Roman State-Church. Of course, there will be many more individual defections to Rome: We have just seen a trickle so far. The Roman State-Church will bend over backwards to accommodate her prodigal children and welcome them home, yielding everything that does not infringe on her central doctrine, the Magisterium of the Roman State-Church. She intends to become Dominatrix of the World, just as she was Dominatrix of Europe during the Middle Ages. She has already ended, for all practical purposes, the Latin mass; the new Romanist service is much more like a neo-evangelical service than it was 40 years ago. In making such cosmetic changes, the Roman State-Church has yielded nothing significant nor yielded anything permanently, but she has gained a great deal.

I will venture to make some specific predictions: Billy Graham, the most visible leader of the neo-evangelicals, will – should God spare his life – endorse future pro-Romanist statements. He has already offered high praise for Roman Catholics and Romanism, incorporating them into all his crusades. His son Franklin Graham will make further approaches to Rome, as will other Arminian evangelists and leaders. Some prominent leaders who we today think we can count on will either remain silent or endorse the ecumenical movement. The alliance between neo-evangelicals and Romanists in the Culture Wars will lead to all sorts of new joint projects and institutions. It will result in the election of our second Romanist president. It will result in the adoption of more

programs at the state and Federal level to funnel money to Roman State-Church and neo-evangelical institutions. The next pope will press even more energetically the ecumenical program of the Roman State-Church, meeting himself with American church leaders, not simply sending his third in command, Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy. Those leaders, in turn, will be deceived by the splendor of the papacy.

As this movement grows, there will, of course, be many who oppose it, but they will become more and more isolated in their churches. They will be criticized as troublemakers, as divisive, as un-Christian and unloving. Many will be forced to leave the churches they are now attending and will learn to cooperate with Christians who are not of their denomination. Denominational boundary lines will break down completely, as the grand coalition of Romanists, Charismatics, and ersatz-evangelicals gathers momentum, influence, and power. On the one side there will be an international movement for the evangelization of the world. On the other, there will be a remnant of Faithful Christians who will do their best to preserve, protect, and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

All of these prognostications assume that history is drawing to a close, that the time of judgment has come and that we are entering the final conflict. But that may not be so. Perhaps a gracious God will grant repentance to millions as the remnant proclaim his Gospel in every clearer and bolder terms. Should such an outpouring of the knowledge of God occur, should the Gospel of justification by faith alone be proclaimed in its pristine purity and power, then we may expect the Roman State Church to suffer another defeat in her plans for world domination. But we do know from Scripture that she will eventually and temporarily be victorious, only to be consumed by the breath of him who shall come in the twinkling of an eye to vindicate his saints and his Church. In the long run, Christians have every reason to be optimists, not because we are so powerful or so numerous but because the right man is on our side – the man of God's own choosing. One little Word from him will end the tyranny of Rome forever.

The chart below compares Christianity with contemporary subjective religion.

Philosophical Theological Locus	Objective Christianity	Subjective Religion
Source of Knowledge	Sixty-six books of Scripture	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-evangelicalism, neo-orthodoxy, and Pentecostalism: reason, nature, experience, observation, feelings, intuitions, common sense, visions, voices, other humans
God	Sovereign, unchanging, rational, triune creator	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-evangelicalism, neo-orthodoxy, and Pentecostalism: God is subordinate to law, to nature, to man; changing, in process; irrational or supra-rational
Sin and its consequences	Violation of God's law, judicial death sentence	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-evangelicalism, neo-orthodoxy, and Pentecostalism: violation of natural law, moral sickness, psychological disorder
Justification	Christ's work <i>for</i> us: Christ's incarnation, lifelong obedience, and substitutionary atonement; imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness to sinners through belief of the truth; justification is historical, objective, forensic	Neo-evangelicalism and Pentecostalism: Spirit's work in us, new birth, being born again. Romanism: infusion of Christ's righteousness, development of man's own righteousness. Modernism, neo-orthodoxy, and liberalism: self-help, psychoanalysis. Justification is experiential, subjective, moral, psychological
Sanctification	Communication of Christ's truth leading to righteousness; change of ideas and attitudes, transforming of the mind, resulting in change of behavior	Romanism: good works, rites, rituals, religious observances, perfectionism; Arminianism: second blessing, entire sanctification; Pentecostalism: Holy Spirit baptism, tongues, laughter, victorious Spirit-filled life; Modernism, liberalism, neo-orthodoxy: good works, good encounters

Regeneration (new birth)	Caused by God, inexperienced by believer; logically precedes belief	Romanism, neo-evangelicalism, Pentecostalism: caused by believer, who first believes and then is regenerated. Logically follows belief. Neo-orthodoxy: encounter with Christ; Modernism, liberalism: psychological wholeness
Adoption of believing sinner as God's child	Legal transaction	Romanism: All men are naturally sons of God, and members of the same spiritual family. Neo-evangelicalism: moral adoption. Liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy: adoption is moral, psychological, or unnecessary, as all men are naturally God's children
Sinfulness of man	Total depravity	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy n. o-evangelicalism, and Pentecostalism: partial depravity, goodness
Salvation	God's initiative, God's election, God's decree, God's irresistible call, Christ's efficacious atonement	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy and neo-evangelicalism: man's initiative, man's decision, man's free will; no salvation necessary, man is good, man just needs a good example
Christ	Both God and man, legal representative of his people	Romanism and neo-evangelicalism: God in a body; liberalism, modernism, and neo-orthodoxy: mere man, good moral example
Worship	Glory to God, truth to man, intellectual and intelligible	Romanism, liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy, and neo-evangelicalism: aesthetic experience, religious experience, entertainment, sharing. Neither intellectual nor intelligible
Gospel	The objective, historical work of Christ <i>for</i> his people: his perfect life, sinless death, and resurrection	Liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy, neo-evangelicalism: what God is doing (or has done) <i>in</i> my life. Romanism: what God has done in the saints and church.

Faith	Understanding of Biblical truths and assent to them	Romanism: assent to teaching of the Church; liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy neo- evangelicalism: belief plus trust plus action; object of belief relatively unimportant; the act of believing is important
Ethics	God's law revealed in Scripture	Romanism: natural law, church directives; neo- evangelicalism, liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy: fleeces, feelings, intuitions, prayer, peace.

Mars Hill Revisited

