

***THE REDEFINING***  
**OF A**  
**C**HRISTIAN

"...For the gate is small,  
and the way is narrow  
that leads to life,  
and few are those  
who find it."

Matthew 7:14

*To  
All Who are Loved of God  
at Countryside  
Called as Saints*

*(Romans 1:7a)*

## PREFACE

In Acts 20:28 we read: “*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*” As a pastor and shepherd of the church, one must guard himself in order that he may guard the flock with which the Holy Spirit has entrusted to him. A shepherd has a two-fold duty: to feed the sheep and to protect the flock from straying. To achieve this, the shepherd must teach the Scripture and warn of error.

Many shepherds today have abandoned their first responsibility to proclaim truth. It should not surprise us, because the Scripture warns that “*the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires* (II Timothy 4:3).” They will not endure sound doctrine, instead both the church and the unchurched will gather for amusement theology. A.W. Tozer said:

For centuries the Church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognizing it for what it was – a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience, a scheme to divert attention from moral accountability. For this she got herself abused roundly by the sons of this world. But of late she has become tired of the abuse and has given over the struggle. She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer the great god, Entertainment, she may as well join forces with him and make what use she can of his powers.<sup>1</sup>

On the other side of shepherding, warning the flock against that which is false is also becoming a lost art. The shepherd is not only to “exhort in sound doctrine,” but “also to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). John R.W. Stott confronts this negligence in this manner:

This emphasis is unpopular today. It is frequently said that pastors must always be positive in their teaching, never negative. But those who say this have either not read the New Testament or, having read it, they disagreed with it. For the Lord Jesus and His apostles gave the example and even set forth the obligation to be negative in refuting error. Is it possible that the neglect of this ministry is one of the major causes of theological confusion in the church today? To be sure, theological controversy is distasteful to sensitive spirits and has its spiritual dangers. Woe to those who enjoy it! But it cannot conscientiously be avoided. If, when false teaching arises, Christian leaders sit idly by and do nothing or turn tail and flee, they will earn the terrible epithet “hirelings” who care nothing for Christ’s flock. Is it right to abandon His sheep and leave them defenseless against the wolves to be like “sheep without a shepherd?” Is it right to be content to see the flock scattered and individual sheep torn to pieces? Is it to be said of believers today, as it was of Israel, that “*They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field*” (Ezekiel 34:5)? Today even some of the fundamental doctrines of historic Christianity are being denied by some church leaders, including

the infinite personality of the living God, the eternal deity, virgin birth, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus, the Trinity, and the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone without any meritorious works. Pastors are to protect God's flock from error and seek to establish them in the truth. <sup>2</sup>

What I have written brings no joy – and woe to me if it does. But I am convinced because pastors are unwilling to warn the flock, the church – like Israel of old – becomes prey to a smorgasbord of movements and ministries all in the name of Christ. Some of these popular ministries may be pulling the believer away from a pure and simple devotion to Christ. Paul warned the Corinthian believers of this and then chided them for being tolerant of another gospel when he said, “but I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully (II Corinthians 11:3, 4).”

I would not expect everyone to have the same level of concern that I have. Part of the calling to be a shepherd is a God-given zeal to protect the flock that is not necessarily common among all of those who are in the flock. I would have preferred to have dealt only with organizations and movements but this issue is so serious, the eternal soul is at stake. I do not question the need for biblical love, morality and unity. I do not question the motives or sincerity of those of whom I write. Regardless of our motives or sincerity, the placing of unity above truth ends ultimately in a betrayal of truth. In evangelical Christianity, there is the development of a new morality where the gospel is being sacrificed for unity, resulting in a new definition of a believer. Who will warn the flock?

We are living in a world where there is almost a total emphasis on the temporal and where people often come to church searching for “what is in it for them.” It is difficult to maintain a perspective on the events that occur just prior to our Lord's return, let alone the eternal. I would petition the reader not to focus so much on individuals but on the prophetic picture of the organized church at the close of the church age. There are those today who teach that the world is going to get better and there will be a great revival before the Lord comes. The gospels (Matthew 24), the epistles (II Thessalonians 2:1-12; I Timothy 4:2; II Timothy 3:1-8; 4:1-4), and the book of Revelation (3:14-22, 12:9, 13:14) warn of a coming day of apostasy and deception prior to the coming of the Lord. This great apostasy and deception will include the building of a one-world religious body which involves all “peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues” (Revelation 17:15). Could it be that some of the popular movements of evangelical Christianity are moving us toward that end?

# ***The Redefining of a Christian***

**I**n August of this year, I was spending some time with one of our missionary families that had come home to the states after serving in Italy. They had been able to keep up with the national news, but were almost totally unfamiliar with changes which had taken place in the *church* in America.

**SURPRISE!**

They were somewhat overwhelmed with two developments in the evangelical church. The first was in the area of worship. Four years ago, they visited churches which had a music director and a choir singing the great hymns of the faith. They returned to find a music team, drums, guitars, drama and other forms of entertainment. They asked themselves the question, "Could we come back to America and be able to worship in the church?"

Second, this missionary family that had just spent years of missionary work among the Roman Catholics of Italy were broken hearted over the growing acceptance of Roman Catholicism by evangelicals. If we here in America believe Romanism has changed and there is no longer any need for the Reformation – maybe we need to visit missionaries in Italy. How could I explain to this couple how popular evangelical leaders seem determined and destined to lead us back to Rome?

As apostasy becomes the trademark of our day, those of us who by God's grace are standing firm are increasingly being labeled as narrow and negative. We should not be overly concerned with the label. Regarding the gospel, our Lord said "*I am the Way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me*" (John 14:6). Now that is being, especially in today's world, very narrow. Our Lord also said:

*Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.*

*Matthew 7:13, 14*

Those who have the courage to point out error, especially in popular movements, are often said to be too negative. When we evaluate ministry as positive or negative then it becomes subjective. We are easily carried away by our emotions. It is easy to rationalize and not be objective.

When someone says we should not be so negative in evaluating movements and ministries, they are right. We should look at life as God does – truth or error – right or wrong – biblical or unbiblical – sound doctrine or false doctrine.

As we examine everything carefully by the Scriptures and pray for the Lord's leading, the promise of our Lord is that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit gets a lot of merit today for everything from barking like a dog to falling down laughing, but without question two of the greatest evidences of the Holy Spirit's work in the life of the believer are the boldness to proclaim the gospel (Acts 1:8) and the sensitivity to be guided in truth (John 16:13).

## A NEW MORALITY

Not all of us were totally comfortable with the Moral Majority and various other coalitions. We understand that America has entered a death spiral of moral decadence. Abortion, crime, violence, divorce, drugs, and much more are threatening the American way of life. We understand that the political environment is often indifferent to Christianity and sometimes hostile. Rarely do the judicial systems or the media show favor toward Christianity.

At the same time, we understand that the real struggle today is not a political or cultural battle but spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:12). It is not stopping sinners from sinning through human law, but it is a transformation from inside out by the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not expecting the world to act in your favor but to stand firm for the cause of Christ no matter what the cost. At times we confuse conservatism and Christianity. Sometimes we feel caught between our love for America and our love for God.

Although there have been victories, the end result was that the American people recently elected a president whose ethics were more questionable than all who served before him. Rubbing salt in our wounds, he claimed to be one of us while appointing to high places many who embrace lifestyles of perversion as defined by Scripture.

Is God in control? Is God sovereign? Was the election, as many said from the pulpit, God's judgment on America? Or, does judgment begin in the household of God (I Peter 4:17)? Is it possible that it is God's will to humble the church and call her back to spiritual warfare? Is it possible that God was saying to the church that political victories and legislated morality are not the answers?

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

John 18:36

Apparently we have not learned. We have not been humbled. We are still convinced we can do it our way and God is on our side. As a result, Satan is presently, in a more subtle way, leading us down a more dangerous path to a new morality. This new morality is different from the moral movement of the past because it is giving us a new definition of a believer.

## THE CATHOLIC CONNECTION

In 1993 Chuck Colson, of Prison Fellowship was awarded the Templeton Prize for progress in religion. The purpose of the prize as stated by its founder, Sir John Mark Templeton, is to encourage understanding of the benefits of each of the great religions. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Roman Catholics and Protestants comprised the panel which chose Chuck Colson as the one-million dollar recipient.

The announcement that Colson would receive it caused an outcry by some evangelicals who asked Colson to decline rather than endorse the ecumenical goals associated with it. We too, wrote Colson and asked him to decline and received the standard answer justifying such involvement in that this was a good opportunity to present the gospel. We wrote and asked for a copy of his speech and found he did not present the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ except for one reference to John 14:6. He said nothing in reference to our Lord that would offend anyone who "believes in God" regardless of their religion.

Most critics of Colson didn't realize that in his speech there was something more subtle, revealing the direction he was going. Colson, speaking after a Muslim chant and before a Buddhist meditation, spoke of "moral breakdown," "moral values," "moral choices," and "moral revival."

In 1994, Colson became involved in an even greater controversy as the leading evangelical in bringing about the Evangelical - Catholic Accord known

as *“Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium”* (ECT). Colson was joined by other well-known evangelicals such as J.I. Packer, Pat Robertson, and Bill Bright. The leading Catholic was Richard John Neuhaus who had converted to Catholicism in 1990 from the Lutheran Church.

This document created an outcry when Neuhaus said, *“By far, the document’s most important single statement . . . is the affirmation that evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ. Everything else flows from that.”*<sup>3</sup> Hopefully, the Church would rise up and confront all those who signed the Accord who were declaring that both Catholics and Protestants agree on justification by faith. We are thankful for the many in the Church who did. We also challenged, in writing, the claims of this document.

How could evangelical leaders who believe in salvation through Christ by grace alone unite with Roman Catholics who hold to grace plus works? The explanations are many.

First, Colson dismissed the differences between Catholics and Evangelicals as “petty quarreling in the camp.”<sup>4</sup> Second, he and other signers defended their actions in that the Catholic signers held to justification by faith regardless of the position of Rome. Yet the leading Catholic of the Agreement, Neuhaus writes in his book, *The Catholic Movement*, that the mission of the church is “to confront humanity with the grace of God in word **AND SACRAMENT**” (emphasis added).<sup>5</sup> Without question, Neuhaus still sees the sacraments as essential to salvation. Neuhaus also defends Pope John Paul’s position that there can be salvation for those who do not know Christ.

Third, we are told that there is a misunderstanding about Rome’s position on justification dating back to Martin Luther. The difference between Luther and Rome was that Luther saw justification as the result of faith in Christ that takes place at the moment of salvation. Roman Catholicism as confirmed by the Council of Trent (1545-63) sees justification as a process that takes place over the lifetime of a believer because it involves more than the finished work of the cross. This is certainly more than a misunderstanding.

Has Rome changed?

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1
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The present Catholic position can be clearly established in the writings of Catholic Keith Fournier. Fournier wrote *Evangelical Catholics* in 1990 and was warmly endorsed by Colson who wrote the forward. Fournier along with William D. Watkins in 1994 authored the book, *A House United? Evangelical and Catholics Together: A Winning Alliance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. J. Ronald Blue, president of CAM International gave this review of the book:

*A House United?* is a disturbing gloss over deeply divergent belief systems. God's house is already united. Everyone who has put his or her trust in Christ for salvation is a member of the one true church. Headquarters, however, are not in Rome or Wheaton or Colorado Springs. The Head of this body is Christ Himself. Those who have not come to Christ in saving faith are outside the house, regardless of their good intentions or religious affiliation.

Fournier contends that in the "process of salvation" through "infant baptism and deeds of faith" a person may attain a right standing before God. Fournier rejects "depravity," seeing mankind as merely "marred" by sin. Every person may therefore attain holiness as God "cooperates" with the human will. Christ's righteousness is infused, not imparted. Believers are not declared righteous through saving faith in Christ; they are given a "seed of righteousness" that may "develop" into saving faith.

Salvation is threefold, according to Fournier. "First, a Catholic can say; 'I have been saved.' Secondly, Catholics say, 'I hope to be saved.'" Salvation in the past tense, he says, is only the beginning for those who have "accepted Jesus Christ and been baptized," and salvation in the future tense is uncertain. "We must persevere in our faith in God . . . and obedience to his will, until the end of our lives.

These teachings, however, are not biblical. The gospel is only good news when it directs a person to the Way, the Truth, and the Life. There is only one Door to this house.<sup>6</sup>

**Colson's assessment of Fournier is quite the opposite. He writes:**

Keith Fournier stands in the breach – truly orthodox in his adherence to Catholic doctrine and fully Evangelical in his relationship to Christ and His creation. Keith's ministry is one of healing. Without compromising or diluting his faith, without any false ecumenicism, he calls all of us as Christians to our common heritage and mission.<sup>7</sup>

**If Fournier is as Colson claims, "fully Evangelical in his relationship to Christ," then we have changed the definition of a Christian or an evangelical or both. Fournier's call is a call to Romanism.**

**In my most recent letter from Colson (June 22, 1995) written on his behalf by Dr. J. Daryl Charles we find this statement:**

In the end, when we speak of justification by faith, we must make an important distinction. Man is justified by faith, not by entertaining a precise and "correct" view of the doctrine of justification. It is Christ who saves/justifies, and those who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Both Protestant evangelicals and official Roman Catholic teaching today confess this truth without hesitation.<sup>8</sup>

**First of all, does not the Holy Spirit use the gospel of Jesus Christ to convict one that he is a sinner in need of the Savior for the forgiveness of his sins so he can stand before God as if he never sinned? Is this not the doctrine of justification? Isn't this God, by His Spirit and His Word, giving a repentant**

sinner the correct view of justification? Isn't this exactly what happened to Martin Luther?

Second, is this the official Roman Catholic teaching today? What could be more official than that stated by Pope John Paul II. In May of this year, the Vatican Information Service released these words from Pope John Paul II:

The gift of salvation cannot be limited to those who, in an explicit way, believe in Christ and have entered the church. 'if salvation is destined for all, it should be in reach of all.' . . . the divine plan has also predisposed a path of salvation for those who through no fault of their own do not know Christ and do not see themselves as Christians.<sup>9</sup>

Official Roman teaching as of May 31, 1995, 9:21 AM is that there is salvation apart from Christ. How does the Pope allow access to salvation to all – even those apart from Christ? In a separate Vatican release, the Pope amplifies Mary's role in the salvation process when he depicted her as "the spiritual mother who intercedes for Christ's Disciples and for all humanity."<sup>10</sup> Official Roman Catholic teaching is that salvation is not available to all through Christ but is available to all through Mary.

It is true that all who call upon the Lord will be saved but the Lord of Romanism is not the Lord of Scripture. The Lord of Romanism is incapable of saving all and incapable of saving any apart from Mary. This is not the Lord of Scripture. This heresy continues to damn millions. The National Catholic Reporter says there are 944 million Catholics in the world equaling almost twenty percent of the world's population.

for "WHOEVER WILL CALL  
UPON THE NAME OF THE  
LORD WILL BE SAVED."  
Romans 10:13

So we have been told we should unite with Catholics, because we have only petty differences. We have misunderstood them and they have changed. This is quite different from saying that yes, there are some Catholics who are truly saved. But what is really uniting evangelicals and Catholics together? The answer is subtle but simple. It is a new morality. When morality becomes an end in itself then all who unite toward that end become your brothers. This new morality has not only the potential to unite Catholics and evangelicals – but all religions of the world. This new morality redefines the believer.

ECT states that Evangelicals and Catholics must jointly "contend for the truth that politics, law, and culture must be secured by moral truth."<sup>11</sup>

Colson writes, "It's high time that all of us who are Christians come together regardless of the difference of our confessions and our traditions and make common cause to bring Christian values to bear in our society."<sup>12</sup>

In a *Christianity Today* article, entitled “Why Catholics Are Our Allies,” Colson defends the ECT by saying that believers are “on the front lines, battling such issues as abortion, pornography, and threats to religious liberty . . .” He goes on to make these statements:

Political alliances express our unity merely as citizens. But today’s culture war is taking place at a level much deeper than politics. At root, it is a battle for truth – and to fight effectively we need a distinctive Christian presence and world-view. . .

ECT calls all orthodox believers to unite on the great truths of the faith . . .

Our best weapon is the distinctiveness of Christian truth, expressed in unity by all true believers. . .

And let’s be certain that we are firing our polemical rifles against the enemy, not against those fighting in the trenches alongside us in defense of the Truth.<sup>13</sup>

When we join the culture war and jump in the trenches with Roman Catholics, which truth is Colson asking us to fight for: The “truth” that justification involves more than faith alone or the Truth that one is justified by faith alone (*sola fide*)? The “truth” that church tradition and the Magisterium have authority over Scripture or the Truth that Scripture stands as the final authority (*sola scriptura*)? The “truth” that salvation involves infant baptism, the Eucharist, and other works or the Truth that one is saved by grace alone (*sola gratia*)?

John White, President of Geneva College and one of the signers of ECT, said that this allows Catholics and evangelicals “permission to work together on major social and cultural issues.”<sup>14</sup> With the moral and social issues becoming the end in itself, we are now heading down the same road as the mainline denominations did a century ago, leading to the dead-end of ecumenical liberalism.

Former Episcopalian Thomas Howard who converted to Romanism contends being an evangelical is to be understood primarily in terms of a distinct moral lifestyle rather than in an affirmation of a distinct set of theological beliefs.<sup>15</sup>

One must remember that one-third of the Moral Majority was Roman Catholic. There is a major difference between coming together for a common cause as opposed to redefining who a Christian is by a common cause. This new morality makes all who join in it your brothers regardless of their position concerning the gospel, regardless of their theological belief.

# PROMISE KEEPERS

Another example of morality redefining the believer is the fastest growing men's movement in America – Promise Keepers (PK). PK also endorses the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Accord. After listening to tapes of their conferences, reading what they produce and promote, and having conversations with those who have attended, we made a decision that we would not – as a church – promote or support Promise Keepers. We did not want to be anti- Promise Keepers, but there was much that made us uncomfortable with the movement. We also knew that there was some good in the movement; some coming to know Christ and others being encouraged to be responsible men.

We believe every Christian organization is no stronger than its foundation and it was clear to us that the leadership of Promise Keepers is a part of the Vineyard Movement. There are many doctrinal problem areas in the Vineyard Movement but none more troublesome than its founder John Wimber's statement on Roman Catholicism:

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.  
I Corinthians 3:11

The Pope . . . by the way is very responsive to the Charismatic movement, and is himself a born-again evangelical. If you've read any of his texts concerning salvation, you'd know he is preaching the gospel as clear as anybody is preaching it in the world today.<sup>16</sup>

In the Promise Keeper's Conferences, founder Bill McCartney – also of the Vineyard Movement – recognizes Roman Catholic priests along with evangelical pastors and desires to bring them all together. He also treats Catholics as part of the saved, and the organization discourages anyone from encouraging Catholics to come out of the Roman Church. Shouldn't those who have received the true gospel separate themselves from a false gospel and follow the footsteps of Luther? There certainly can be Catholics who are saved and still in the system, but don't we have the support of Scripture to encourage them to come out of the system? Doesn't the Scripture command them to come out?

When McCartney states, "Promise Keepers doesn't care if you're Catholic," does he mean that those who come to the conferences are truly born again Catholics or does it matter? A look at the sixth promise of a Promise Keeper helps provide the necessary answer. The sixth promise is:

Reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.<sup>17</sup>

We agree that race should never be a barrier or even an issue. But Promise Keepers either knowingly or unknowingly presents to their followers a great paradox. How can you reach beyond denominational barriers and at the same time maintain biblical unity? The answer is – you cannot (John 17:20,21; Romans 16:17; Galatians 1:6-9).

Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

Romans 16:17

In reality Promise Keepers is asking us to violate the Scriptures, or you might say at best – reach out to all without the cautions and constraints of Scripture.

Charismatic Pastor Jack Hayford is a prominent writer and speaker for Promise Keepers. In July of this year, Hayford along with Paul Crouch were featured speakers at a four-day ecumenical conference of which half of the 10,000 attendees were Roman Catholic. Crouch, the head of the vast TBN television ministry has declared:

I have come to the conviction that Martin Luther made a mistake. He should have never left the Roman Catholic Church.

I am eradicating the word Protestant out of my vocabulary. I am not protesting anything. It is time for Catholics and non-Catholics to come together as one in the Spirit and one in the Lord.<sup>18</sup>

As we continue to hear more statements like this, should it not raise a few questions? Are these men just deceived? Do they just misunderstand Romanism? Are they, for the sake of unity, willing to embrace a false gospel? Or do I dare ask, is it possible that they do not have a spiritual understanding of the gospel?

Hayford writes in *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*:

Redeeming worship centers on the Lord's Table. Whether your tradition celebrates it as Communion, Eucharist, the Mass, or the Lord's Supper, we are called to this centerpiece of Christian worship.<sup>19</sup>

I need not quote the Pope again to make known the present day teaching of Romanism that the Eucharist is atoning. Promise Keepers, without question not wanting to offend Catholics, but to treat them as brothers, recognizes “another gospel” for the sake of unity in the context of worship. We have at Countryside more converts from Catholicism than any other faith. The Lord has also sent us many wonderful families who have come out of Romanism. They are not offended when told the Eucharist is another gospel, because that is one of the reasons they left Romanism when God – through salvation, opened their eyes to the truth of Scripture. John W. Montgomery wrote that

“considerations of truth must precede considerations of union, unity, worship, or fellowship.”<sup>20</sup> So does the Scripture.

The emphasis of both the gospels and the epistles is on unity. Not on the unity of different and diverse groups but on the unity of the gospel. McCartney, Hayford, and other Promise Keepers keep referring to John 17 for their call to unity. They quickly point out in verse 21 and 22 “they all may be one,” but fail to emphasize verse 21 “that they may also be in Us.” There cannot be true biblical unity between those who are in Christ simply by grace and faith and those who are still trying to be in Christ by receiving Him through the Eucharist. One is saved by the true gospel and one is lost and deceived by a false gospel. II Corinthians 6:15 asks “*what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?*” The answer is nothing when it comes to the gospel, the true source of biblical unity; not only in John 17 but the entire New Testament.

The gospel is designed by God both to unite and divide. It is designed to unite man to God and place all believers in the unity of the body of Christ. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the moment of salvation (I Corinthians 6:15-20; 12:12-13). The gospel is also designed to divide by being a stumbling block, foolishness, and an offense to those who do not believe. The only way to eliminate the dividing design of the gospel is to change the gospel. Many times I have seen visitors leave our services in a hurry because the gospel was an offense to them. I would much rather stand before God having offended with the gospel than to entertain the lost in their sin. Michael Horton writes “it is better for the church to have peace in the next life than in this one. Better to proclaim the true gospel, with earthly divisions, than to abandon the gospel for spurious, humanly crafted unity.”<sup>21</sup>

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ.  
Galatians 1: 6,7

The Promise Keepers’ view that Catholics are saved was recently demonstrated at an event reported in *The Dallas/Fort Worth Heritage*.

Mike Gendron, a Dallas Theological Seminary graduate who leads an evangelical outreach to Roman Catholics, recounted a March 25 encounter with some Texas state PK executives attending a Dallas workshop for various ministries. Gendron told *The Heritage* that while manning his ministry booth he was openly criticized by PK staff members who said that Catholics were “already saved, so what’s the need for this [Gendron’s] ministry?”<sup>22</sup>

I do not desire to be on the growing list of Promise Keepers critics, but I am convinced that unless they are willing to change their sixth promise to include the constraints and cautions of Scripture, they are a part of a vast

growing movement across America that is giving a new definition to who a believer really is. If Promise Keepers is unwilling to be more selective in who speaks, writes or represents them, they will become nothing more than a men's moral movement. There could be no greater proof of this than the fact that Mormons are now being drawn to Promise Keepers.

Not long ago the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Promise Keepers is attracting both Catholics and Mormons. The *Times* said "Chip Rawlings and fellow Los Angeles Mormon leaders urged members of the Latter-Day Saints to participate in the movement."<sup>23</sup> If the end in itself is the life changing gospel of Jesus Christ this could not happen. But if the end in itself is for men to be good moral men and keep their promises, in time even more than Catholics and Mormons will be drawn in. Promise Keepers produce much to defend what they call a biblical basis for unity; however, inclusion of Mormons into the movement speaks far louder than all they can place in print.

I have recently read the Promise Keepers latest book entitled, *The Awesome Power of Shared Beliefs* by E. Glen Wagner. The book covers without question "five foundational convictions that all who call themselves Christians must agree on:"

1. The inerrancy of the Word of God
2. The nature and attributes of God
3. The Person and Deity of Jesus Christ
4. The role of the Holy Spirit in our salvation
5. Redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ<sup>24</sup>

We would agree these are necessary for unity, but they are also necessary to separate us from those who do not have such beliefs. But unfortunately Wagner in a subtle way leads us down the road to a new morality. He states:

Could it be that the church in the United States is barely keeping up with the population growth because of a lack of unity? Could our lack of unity be contributing to the moral decline we are experiencing? Even with all that is at our disposal – brilliant theologians, gifted communicators, beautiful facilities, high technology – all the conferences, retreats, and seminars – we're just not making a dent.

We're not transforming the culture. The culture is transforming us. It's time to reverse that trend. That is unity's purpose.

This unity also brings with it a *power*. It is the power that is spoken of in Acts 1:

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).*<sup>25</sup>

Statements like this should stir our minds to many questions. Is moral decline the result of a lack of unity or the fallenness of man? Is the answer to moral decline unity or the gospel? Are we to transform the culture or are we to transform lives with a life changing gospel? Is the power of the Holy Spirit dependent upon unity? Was Paul void of the Holy Spirit's power when he said, "*all who are in Asia turned away from me* (II Timothy 1:15)?" Would God excuse you for not being His witness if you were the only believer in the world? Did Paul not say that his imprisonment "turned out for greater progress of the gospel" when he did not have the benefits of unity, male bonding and shared beliefs (Philippians 1:12)? The most dangerous hour of the church is when Satan slips in a little error while speaking volumes of truth. The awesome power of the Christian life is the Holy Spirit working in unity with the truth of Scripture.

The equation of unity equaling power is itself an example of the cultural and political influence on the Promise Keepers as it is with the ECT. True spiritual unity does not come through cultural, political, or any other human means. Man cannot orchestrate true biblical unity. There is a difference between unity and uniformity. True spiritual unity is the work of the Holy Spirit within. Uniformity is the result of pressure from without. We must not succumb to this pressure regardless of its popularity.

Promise Keepers' moral emphasis is clearly stated under "Our Commitments."

God is our model. Consequently, a promise keeper chooses to reflect the trustworthy nature of his Lord. This character is summed up in the word *integrity*. Integrity by definition is a "firm adherence to a code of moral values." Actually, one could say that a man in the process of becoming a man of integrity is a *Promise Keeper*.<sup>26</sup>

Certainly God is moral, but God is much more than moral. It is not hard to redefine a Christian on the basis of morality, if we simply define God on the basis of morality. As finite men, we cannot fully comprehend the infinite God, but we can understand what He has revealed about Himself in Scripture. God is holy (Psalm 22:3), and without holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). God in His holiness is not united with His creation, rather He transcends it. His holiness sets Him apart. The end result of a personal relationship with the living God, through faith in Jesus Christ, is not mere morality within the culture, but holiness that sets the believer apart from the culture.

God is righteous (Psalm 11:7), and without righteousness no one will enter His presence. The scribes and Pharisees considered themselves very

moral men, but Jesus said, “*unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:20). There is a major difference between being moral – as opposed to being holy and righteous. The difference is the same as between heaven and hell. Man can always rise to a certain level of integrity and morality through human law, religion, discipline or keeping promises. Only when you give up on your religion, your morals, and your promises and by faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior (John 1:12) as the only One who can save you, (Acts 4:12; I Timothy 2:5) are you declared righteous before God (Romans 4:5). Man has many ways to become moral, many in the name of Christ, but God has only one way to make man holy and righteous. This new morality which redefines a Christian and places evangelicals, Catholics, and Mormons in unity can only come at the expense of the gospel.

## THE GOOD OUTWEIGHS THE BAD

Often it is said to me, “If people are getting saved and lives are being changed, then why not be a part of this?” How can you be against something that has so many positives? The New Testament spends a majority of its time warning us about that which is false. I wonder why? Why is the Bible so insistent on sound doctrine? One answer is simple. It is so we do not give the devil an opportunity.

Whenever we have a mixture of truth and error in the ministry, two things happen. God’s Word “. . . will not return unto Him void. . . ,” so He will take the truth, save souls and change lives. At the same time, Satan will take the error and blind many and replace true spiritual growth with an appealing substitute. Those who overlook the error for the positive results buy into an unbiblical premise that the end justifies the means.

The Navigators last year formed a “strategic alliance” with the Promise Keepers. NavPress has published pro-Catholic books along with *The Masculine Journey* which strips Christ of His Deity. When Navigator President Terry Taylor was asked how he could justify publishing such a book as *The Masculine Journey* he commented on the positive influence Promise Keepers was having on men in our society and said “The positives far outweigh the negatives in what is truly the remarkable work of God in our time.”<sup>27</sup>

There is nothing more Satan would like to do than to reduce Christianity to the positive outweighing the negative, or the good outweighing the bad. With the good outweighing the bad, all the religions of the world can be brought together. From a moral premise, every religion of the world has something

good to offer. It is here that the push to unite different faiths on the basis of morality goes far beyond the evangelical world.

## BEYOND EVANGELICALISM

When Colson received the Templeton prize at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, the final consensus of the parliament was that there is truth to be found in all religions, and that God's light shines through them all equally, even while all adhere to differences of opinion. All we have to do is ignore the negatives, the false doctrines, the other gospels and all of a sudden we are one. This is exactly what is happening in evangelicalism, but it doesn't stop there.

In 1993, William J. Bennett, also a Catholic, came out with The Book of Virtues. His final chapter on faith is a case in point of the moral theology that is sweeping our world. Bennett writes:

There is nothing distinctively Christian, however, in recognizing that religious faith adds a significant dimension to the moral life of humanity worldwide. Faith is a source of discipline and power and meaning in the lives of the faithful of any major religious creed . . . . What Paul cites as "the fruit of the Spirit" . . . . has its parallels in all the major faiths . . . . In a world so fragmented and full of woe, faith in its underlying unity and goodness is a sustaining encouragement to those who are working on reality's "surface" – within any of the major religious traditions . . . .<sup>28</sup>

Bennett is part of a growing number of high profile men who believe that on the basis of morality, virtue, and goodness; all the religions of the world can be united. In fact, we can do it in the name of Christ, who is the perfect example of virtue, goodness, and morality. He cannot be the Savior of all religions, but He can be the moral centerpiece of all religions. It can even be done in His name!

Is this process already in motion? When Pope John Paul II was named "Man of the Year" by *Time* magazine, the Vatican Information Service released a statement that "John Paul's ambitions for the millennial year are vast and include having a summit of all the monotheistic religions on Mount Sinai."<sup>29</sup>

How could the Pope, who is now the world leader in ecumenism, pull this off? In January, this year, Pope John Paul ended his trip to Africa with a call for the world's great religions to unite on behalf of shared moral values. He was addressing Hindu and Buddhist leaders. Unity and Oneness, not in the gospel, not in doctrine, but in shared moral values! Pope John Paul's moral basis for unity comes across strongly in his recent bestseller, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* and a strong papal letter released by the Vatican this

summer called, “UT UNUM SINT” (That They May Be One). While in America in October, the Pope called on the United Nations “to become a moral center where all the nations of the world feel at home.”

For years theologians have searched for an answer to the question of how all the religions of the world could be brought together to fulfill Revelation 17:15. In recent years, many thought it would be the Charismatic movement. This movement may have crossed all denominational lines, but because of its extremes it has its limits. Morality coupled with religion has no limits. It has the potential to redefine who “believers” really are. It has the potential to change the mission of the church. It has the potential to unite all the religions of the world, and it is well on its way.

## PARA-CHURCH IS IN

Christian ministries not administered by a specific church are defined as para-church ministries. These ministries have often been on the leading edge of evangelism and an important arm of the church. Increasingly these ministries are becoming a burden to the local church pastor who is called to protect his flock. Many para-church organizations see the local church as their “market” and church members as their “customers.” Colorado Springs has become the mecca of para-church ministries. A survey recently revealed that seventy-six percent of the residents of Colorado Springs do not attend church. Has the para-church become the church? This is not to say there are not many evangelistic, doctrinally sound para-church ministries that remain an important arm of the church.

Earlier this year, I received a letter from a man who runs a national Christian radio network. After he had attended several of our services he wrote:

*Of increasing concern to me has been the near cart blanche acceptance of many of the movements, individuals and organizations to whom you referred without so much as a cursory inquiry of their biblical basis or theological foundation. Little doubt that the para-church is in. One is only left to wonder at what expense?*

Apparently the expense for many of the para-church ministries is millions of dollars lost in a foolish scam that clearly violates the Scripture. The expense to a local church pastor who wants to guard his flock may be even greater.

For example, when people wanted to promote Promise Keepers in the church it required literally hours of research – listening to tapes, reading all they promoted, produced, and embraced. Doctrinal statements and statements of purpose are almost meaningless. Valuable time was consumed that could have been used in evangelizing, praying, studying the Word or discipling.

Most pastors apparently go with the positive and popular and fail to labor at protecting their sheep, disregarding that they will incur a stricter judgment as shepherds of their flock (James 3:1). When they fail to protect themselves, they cannot protect the flock. Most fold under the pressure.

After hours of research, if theological and doctrinal problems are discovered, the expense and weight becomes even greater. How do you communicate this to the flock? Who are we to speak out against high profile leaders? How many of your own will you offend? Not everyone appreciates your desire and calling to protect them.

Para-church ministries like Promise Keepers claim a commitment to the local church. How does an organization that is a blend of biblical truth, the Charismatic movement, the Vineyard Movement, psychology, and ecumenism really help the local church? How does it help the pastor who is responsible to be a shepherd? If Promise Keepers is committed to the local church, then it should be committed to the purity of the gospel and sound doctrine. These are what God uses to build His church, and anything less gives Satan an open door.

If Promise Keepers practiced the same commitments they have placed in writing, they would greatly thin their ranks – not only attendees but also representatives. Very few para-church ministries are willing to thin their ranks. Every pastor who stands firm against the integration of psychology into the church knows it thins the ranks. Every pastor who stands firm against the false “felt needs” gospel of entertainment knows it thins the ranks. Popular movements financed by their many fans with an abundance of resources seem unwilling to pay the cost and are quickly forsaking the gospel for the sake of unity, popularity, and success. The local church pastor is simply dismissed as one who is envious of another’s success.

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Colossians 2:8

# CONFESS ME BEFORE MEN

Part of the *Evangelical-Catholic Accord* was an agreement not to proselytize among the two faiths. This is only the beginning. In Colorado Springs, a non-proselytizing agreement in public schools was signed between Jews, Catholics and leaders of such ministries as Focus on the Family (James Dobson), Navigators (Terry Taylor), and Young Life (Terry McGonigal) along with area churches. A full page ad called a “Covenant of Mutual Respect” was run in the Gazette Telegraph. The Catholic Herald reported that Bishop Richard Hanifer of the Diocese of Colorado Springs said, “The effort to evangelize by some communities was creating an atmosphere of animosity.” Lauren Libby, Vice President of the Navigators, said the results were positive and reported the response was, “it’s good to see the body of Christ unified.” This “body of Christ” included Jews, Protestants and Catholics fully entrenched in Romanism. Pam Moore, area director for Young Life said she attended the meetings to learn from other religious leaders and that “it is important that we respect each other’s views.”<sup>30</sup>

Peter and John would not agree to such a proposal by the Sanhedrin and said “*we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard*” (Acts 4:20). Christians must follow their example and obey God rather than men. Can you imagine Paul calling a truce with the Judaizers? He said, “*for I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh*” (Romans 9:3). God forbid that we would have such a lack of love for the lost.

Jesus Christ, with moral character above reproach, full of compassion and love, and performing signs and wonders could have had all of Israel eating out of His hand. But in the end, even the sheep had scattered. The end in itself, for Christ, has never been gathering a crowd, churching the unchurched, or placing tares among the wheat at the expense of the gospel. The end in itself, for Christ, has never been unity at the expense of the gospel. The end in itself, for Christ, has never been morality at the expense of a regenerated heart. Jesus Christ poured His eternal equality with God, His life, His blood, into the gospel. God forbid that we would so quickly forsake the gospel.

Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.

Philippians 2:6

What we see today may have far more serious ramifications than meet the human eye. Jeremiah wrote, “All who forsake Thee will be put to shame. Those who turn away on earth will be written down, because they have

forsaken the fountain of living water, even the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:13). Our Lord said:

*Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven”*  
*Matthew 10:32-33*

For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it.

Mark 8:35

No wonder Peter wrote:

*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”*  
*I Peter 3:15 KJV*

Where is the man of integrity? Where is the man who fears the Lord? Where is the man who with meekness and fear will never forsake the gospel? Where is the man who would stand with the Apostle Paul and say:

*But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.*  
*Galatians 1:8,9*

For Paul, there was rejoicing when the gospel was preached even with wrong motives (Philippians 1:18) but a strong condemnation for those who deviated from that of which he was not ashamed (Romans 1:16).

John Armstrong writes:

*The current absence of confidence in the gospel message itself parallels the scene in Luther's day. Can the West be turned before our Christian heritage is completely abandoned? The greatest threat to us as we stand at the beginning of a new millennium is not in the world around us, but in the church itself.<sup>31</sup>*

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16

Could it be that the true church is heading for a blood bath, as in the past, at the hands of the organized church? Could it be before the Lord takes the Church home, He purges and purifies it with something similar to the

Inquisition? Those of us who stand firm on the true gospel are quickly becoming the enemies of those who promote ecumenism. It is possible that there has never been a time since the early church that the local church needs to fulfill the exhortation of the writer of Hebrews when he writes:

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.

Revelation 12:11

*Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.*

*Hebrews 10:25*

On the other hand, believers can rejoice in the faithfulness of God's word which has clearly foretold the sad state of the organized church just prior to our Lord's return (I Timothy 4:1; II Timothy 3:1-9, 4:3-4; Revelation 3:14-22). What God has declared will come to pass (Isaiah 55:11). Possibly the greatest indication that we are seeing "the day drawing near" is the sad state of "Christianity."

Again, I have no pleasure in what I have written except for the defense of the gospel. I could wish for the sake of the great number who are forsaking the gospel for unity that I am wrong. Certainly there needs to be unity where biblical unity should exist. Certainly true disciples should demonstrate their love for one another. Also there is a great need for morality and integrity among men. But I am afraid there is much being labeled in our day as "great movements of God" that do not have the support of the gospel or Scripture. This "Great Awakening" is not being built upon the only hope of all mankind, the lifechanging gospel of Jesus Christ, but upon a new morality that will unify all the religions of the world in the name of Christ while redefining a "Christian."

## APPENDIX I

# THE CATHOLIC CONNECTION

The Catholic connection certainly goes far beyond the ECT and its acceptance by the Promise Keepers. In May of this year Pope John Paul II released an encyclical making it clear that essential Roman Catholic teachings would not be compromised for unity such as the authority of the Pope and the Church. This encyclical was warmly received by both the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches.

Twelve years ago, when Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost was teaching at Dallas Theological Seminary that the Protestant movement would once again unite with Romanism before the coming of Christ, few expected the growing list of evangelicals who have shown some openness to Rome. The following list is in no way exhaustive:

*Signers of Evangelicals and Catholics Together:*

Chuck Colson - Prison Fellowship

J.I. Packer - Regents College

Pat Robertson - CBN, Christian Coalition

John White - National Association of Evangelicals

Richard Mouw - Fuller Theological Seminary

Mark Noll - Wheaton College

Bill Bright - Campus Crusade for Christ

*and twelve others.*

*Covenant of Mutual Respect* - A nonproselytizing agreement in Colorado Springs

James Dobson - Focus on the Family

Terry McGonigal - Director of the Institute of Young Life Ministries for Young Life

Terry Taylor - Director of U.S. Ministries - The Navigators

*Other ministries and individuals who have shown openness to Rome:*

Kenneth Kantzer, Editor of *Christianity Today*

Jack Hayford - Church on the Way, Van Nuys, California

Luis Palau Evangelistic Association

Jack Van Impe

Hank Hanegraff - Christian Research Institute

World Vision International

Youth With A Mission

Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship

Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship

**Willowcreek Community Church**

Although Willowcreek will not take a position on the ECT which is in keeping with the church growth philosophy of not alienating anyone, the Willowcreek Association is made up of over 50 denominations including Roman Catholic and Seventh-Day Adventist churches.

**Southern Baptist Convention**

Both Richard Land, Christian Life Commission and Larry Lewis, Home Mission Board signed the ECT but withdrew under pressure. They released a joint statement that "we are not personally rejecting the intent of the document" (NIRR, April 17, 1995).

For the first time a Roman Catholic priest addressed the Southern Baptist Convention this year. Father Frank Ruff of the Diocese of Owensboro, Kentucky is the field representative for U.S. bishop's Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. He was named an official observer of the Southern Baptist Convention (The Texas Catholic, July, 1995).

The Southern Baptist/Roman Catholic Conversation is a 17-member committee co-directed by Bishop J. Kenrick Williams of the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky and James Dixon, a Baptist from Fort Washington, M.D. representing America's two largest denominations. The committee will release jointly written material

on poverty, life, racism, and healing. Meetings have been attended by Richard Land of the Christian Life Commission and James Draper, President of the Sunday School Board. The Houston Chronicle reported that Bishop Williams stated that “we don’t find any antipathy at all” and he believes that someday Catholics and Baptists might formally become one denomination (Houston Chronicle, May 21, 1994).

#### Navigators

Supports the ECT and published pro-Catholic books like *A House United? Evangelical and Catholics Together: A Winning Alliance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

#### Robert Schuller

“It is time for Protestants to go to the shepherd (Pope) and say ‘what do we have to do to come home?’ (Los Angeles Herald Examiner, September 19, 1987)”

## APPENDIX II

# VOICES OF THE PAST

*“For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's sake shall save it.”*

*Jesus Christ*

*“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”*

*Apostle Paul*

. . . Thus they were removed from Christ, not in that they entirely rejected Christianity but because in such a corruption only a fictitious Christ was left to them. So today the Papists choose to have a half Christ and a mangled Christ and so none at all and are therefore removed from Christ. They are full of superstitions which are directly opposed to the nature of Christ. Let it be carefully observed that we are removed from Christ when we accept that which is inconsistent with His mediatorial office; for light cannot be mixed with darkness.

John Calvin

Unity without truth is useless. When Rome has repealed the decrees of Trent and her additions to the creed, and when she has formally renounced image worship, Mary worship, and transubstantiation, then and not until then, will it be time to talk of reunion with her. Till then I call on all Christians to resist to the death this idea of reunion with Rome.

Bishop J.C. Ryle

. . . because it wounds Christ, because it robs Christ of His glory, because it puts sacramental efficacy in the place of His atonement, and lifts a piece of bread in the place of the Saviour, and a few drops of water in place of the Holy Ghost, and puts a fallible man like ourselves up as the Vicar of Christ on earth; if we pray against it, because it is against Him, we shall love the persons though we hate their errors; we shall love their souls though we loathe and detest their dogmas. . .

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

I remind you that the Protestant Reformers were not just bigoted zealots or fools. Their eyes were opened by the Holy Spirit; Luther, Calvin, Knox, all of them. They saw this horrible monstrosity depicted in the Bible and the warning against. At the risk of even losing their lives they stood up and protested. They confronted Rome, . . . The Roman Catholic Church is a counterfeit, a sham, it represents prostitution of the worst and most diabolical kind. It is indeed a form of the antichrist; it is to be rejected and denounced, but, above all, it is to be countered. And there is only one thing that can counter it and that is a Biblical, doctrinal Christianity. People who hold evangelistic campaigns and say, “Are you Roman Catholics? go back to your church,” are denying New Testament teaching. We must warn them.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

## APPENDIX III

# THE NARROW WAY

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."*

*John 14:6*

*"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*

*I Timothy 2:5*

*"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."*

*Acts 4:12*

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."*

*Ephesians 2:8,9*

*"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."*

*Titus 3:5*

*"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

*II Corinthians 5:21*

*"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."*

*Romans 5:8-10*

*"Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."*

*Hebrews 7:25*

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*“For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach – if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven. . .”*

*Colossians 1:13-23*

*Additional copies available upon request*

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## November 1, 1995

Enclosed is a copy of "The Redefining of a Christian." What I have written has been on my heart for the past several months, as I have witnessed the direction the church is going in light of Biblical prophecy.

On the news Sunday night, October 15, 1995, they interviewed one of the participants in the Million Man March. He said, it was "the message (oneness and unity) that was important and not the messenger." It immediately reminded me of a coming day when this oneness will be a one-world: government, economy, and religion; and the world will realize only too late that the messenger will be the Man of Sin and a false Messiah.

The NIRR reported that Nation of Islam leader, Louis Farrakhan, "spoke of moral and spiritual renewal." They went on to report that Farrakhan's message has been sounded by Promise Keepers speakers and Pope John Paul II. The Los Angeles Times - Washington Post News Service in a follow-up to the Million Man March released this statement:

Mr. Farrakhan's message of self-reliance is also strikingly similar to that of the predominantly white Christian conservative Promise Keepers movement. Social scientists who specialize in religious trends see an overlapping that could lead to common ground between the movements at some point.

One may ask, how can one group, brought together by the head of the Nation of Islam, be brought together with another group headed up by evangelicals? I too believe this union is possible because the evangelical church has now taken the lead in redefining a Christian. This redefinition is not only here in America, but it is taking place around the world.

I received this week a letter from Virgil Reeves, one of our missionaries who is in France with UFM. He said that many now are claiming that Europe is already evangelized. He said those who are now considered Christian "include not only born-again believers, but also all Roman Catholics, Orthodox - and even sometimes Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses and other 'Christian' sects." He went on to write that "in France only 0.5% of the population are Christians in the Biblical sense."

In "The Redefining of a Christian," I express my concern for unification on something other than the gospel. This concern is centered upon the Evangelical-Catholic Accord (ECT) and the Promise Keepers. Before sending the final copy to the printer, I sent a copy of the transcript to Chuck Colson (Prison Fellowship), Bill McCartney (founder of Promise Keepers), Randy Phillips (president of Promise Keepers), James Dobson (Focus on the Family), Terry McGonigal (Director of the Institute of Young Life Ministries for Young Life) and Terry Taylor (President of U.S. Ministries - The Navigators). I asked

each of them if I had accurately represented their position and were they willing to defend their position biblically. Only Colson replied.

Chuck Colson's reply was cordial. He felt I had misrepresented him on two points. One, he did not believe there were Hindus or Buddhists on the panel that selected him for the Templeton prize. Second, he felt he clearly presented the gospel in receiving the award. The participants of the panel came from a written source. My determination of the gospel presentation is based upon I Corinthians 15:3, 4; and the fact that the early church starting with Pentecost preached Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected. Even if it were true that I misrepresented Colson on this, these are minor points and his letter confirms that I accurately represent his position on the ECT.

I must admit being in the role of a critic is a difficult and unpopular position but I know of many pastors across America who share my concern. Charles Spurgeon said there is a little bit of heresy in all of us, and I believe all of us, including myself, need some biblical correction from time to time.

My prayer is that "The Redefining of A Christian" will cause all of us to be examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things are so (Acts 17:11b). To make sure we have the true message and the True Messenger.

Pastor Tom Watson

## ***A Follow-Up To:***

### **THE REDEFINING OF A CHRISTIAN**

In November of 1995, we released a booklet entitled “The Redefining of a Christian” in which major concerns were brought to light involving “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” (ECT) and Promise Keepers (PK). Although “*Redefining*” was written primarily for the flock of Countryside, it was also sent to a sampling of pastors, theologians, and Christian organizations mainly across the Midwest. We did not anticipate the response – requests reaching as high as 300 per day – that made it necessary to go into a second printing.

The response overall has been very encouraging: confirming we are not alone in our stand for sound doctrine and the purity of the gospel. The response from many pastors was that they too were taking the same stand and seeing some departure from their flocks as a result of it. Others reported they had uneasy feelings about those movements and “*Redefining*” served as a confirmation for them. Others responded that they assumed because of the well-respected leadership involved that there was nothing about which to be concerned. How sad it is when men become the standard by which we place our approval rather than the Scripture. It serves to remind us of the great accountability before God of high profile leaders who influence hundreds of pastors . . . who in turn influence thousands within the flock.

The following letter from a pastor in Kansas is representative of most of the many responses we received.

I have just finished reading *The Redefining of a Christian*. I was challenged by its message. I have read numerous articles, both pro and con, about Promise Keepers, but found this to be the best approach I have read to date. Most articles condemning Promise Keepers make broad and sweeping charges that are often not documented, thereby leaving the reader feeling that the author merely had an ax to grind but no substantive proof of the allegations. The result would be a mixed feeling toward both sides of the issue.

I have never put my finger on the issue of morality vs. true spirituality as you have done so well in this short work. I commend you on seeing this as a dangerous issue. We recently lost a family from our church for a “more progressive” church that has been openly pushing Promise Keepers. In their letter to the Board of our church, they stated that we were acting as though we were the only ones with the truth, when we should be joining with others, even if we disagree doctrinally, to demonstrate the unity of Christ on moral issues such as abortion, pornography, etc. I had never seen the subtle move from the Gospel to morality before. This is a message that needs to be sounded before our people, and I will do that.

*“Redefining,”* as expected, was not above criticism with one pastor wanting to know if I considered myself smarter than these popular leaders. You can rest assured that I often have entertained the same questions as Martin Luther when he stood alone for the same truths and approached the *Diet of Worms* already condemned for his faith. Luther asked:

How often has my trembling heart palpitated - are you alone the wise one? Are all the others in error? Have so many centuries walked in ignorance? What if it should be you who err, and drag so many with you into error, to be eternally damned?

My intent was not just to share what was heavy on my heart but to speak the truth in love. Two of the most encouraging responses came from former mentors who are on the staff of Dallas Theological Seminary.

One professor wrote:

Thank you for sending me a copy of *“The Redefining of a Christian.”* I have read it carefully and I find your observations and conclusions to be very compatible with my own. The problem is how to express concerns in wholesome, healing, and positive ways and yet with strong biblical conviction. You have done well in that respect. What the church and world need are prophets who know how and are willing to “speak the truth in love” no matter the consequences. This, after all, is what Jesus did.

Another professor wrote:

Thank you my brother for sending me a copy of your *Redefining of a Christian*. I really appreciate it. I’m proud of you. What you did took great courage. You did your work in love and with compassion. It shows.

I too have been deeply concerned with this whole trend. As you might suspect I am especially concerned about the direction our school takes via its leaders and their involvement with Colson and the Promise Keepers.

Before printing *“Redefining,”* I sent a copy of the manuscript to those leaders I took issue with asking if I had accurately represented their position. At the time of the first printing, only Chuck Colson replied. Since then I have received a reply from “Focus on the Family” written on behalf of Dr. James Dobson by the Vice President of Ministry Correspondence. She wrote:

I’m afraid your representation of Dr. Dobson’s position is not accurate.

She went on to say:

The “Covenant of Mutual Respect” is a short document, signed by a number of the most eminent religious leaders in Colorado Springs, which promises that “areas of possible disagreement” will be “addressed” with an attitude of “openness, respect and love . . .” It says nothing about non-proselytizing or the public schools.

I would like you to read the following article from “The Catholic Herald,” June 2, 1993, headlined “Evangelizing by some has created animosity.”

COLORADO SPRINGS – The influx of Christian evangelical groups to Colorado Springs has diversified the community’s religious offerings. But it also has led to a potentially dangerous competitive situation between the various religious groups. “The effort to evangelize by some communities was creating an atmosphere of animosity,” said Bishop Richard Hanifen of the Diocese of Colorado Springs. About a year ago, Rabbi Howard Hirsch of Temple Shalom and Bishop Hanifen both found that Jewish and Catholic youth were being evangelized at school by other students of different faiths. Terry McGonigal, director of the Institute of Youth Ministries for Young Life, agreed that other Christian youth were being evangelized in schools as well.

“We thought we could either go to war or go to peace, the latter of which is more in keeping with all of our Judeo-Christian traditions,” Bishop Hanifen said.

. . . Youth leaders attended the first meeting June 26, 1992, to discuss whether the evangelization efforts were a problem, and determined they were. On October 15, 1992, religious leaders gathered again, this time with leaders from churches and organizations involved. “We looked at how we were going to get along, instead of becoming a new religious way,” Bishop Hanifen said.

. . . “Our community has seen so much division, we thought people could benefit from a healthy statement from their religious leaders,” Bishop Hanifen said. So 18 religious leaders signed a “Covenant of Mutual Respect” agreement, reaffirming their Scriptural commitments to justice, mercy, righteousness and peace for all.

Among those who signed the agreement were Bishop Hanifen, Rabbi Hirsch, McGonigal, and others such as James Dobson of Focus on the Family, the Rev. Ted Haggard of New Life Church, the Rev. John Stevens of First Presbyterian Church and the Rev. Deborah Tinsley of Broadmoor Community Church. The statement ran as a full-page advertisement, titled “A Message to the People of Colorado Springs: Covenant of Mutual Respect,” in Colorado Springs’ daily newspaper in April. All who signed the agreement helped pay for the ad.

Lauren Libby, Vice President of The Navigators, said the response has been positive. “Most of the comments we received were along the nature of, ‘It’s good to see the Body of Christ unified in Colorado Springs, ’” he said.

To say that the Covenant of Mutual Respect says nothing about non-proselytizing or the public schools totally disregards what brought it about. It is like saying the Cross says nothing about sin. I am convinced that these agreements, ECT included, are a compromise of the Gospel.

The Vice President of Ministry Correspondence for Focus on the Family went on to write:

. . . whether you like him and agree with him or not, you will have to admit that John Paul *does* “name the name of Jesus Christ” and that he *is* an extremely “eminent religious leader.”

And then states further:

As for Dr. Dobson, he *has* on occasion publicly commended the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church for their strong commitment to the pro-life cause and their courageous opposition to the pro-abortionists and social engineers in Cairo and Beijing. But this is only to give credit where credit is due.

For nearly 2,000 years the Scripture has told us if anyone brings another gospel “*let him be anathema*” (literally – let him be eternally damned) (Galatians 1:8,9). Today it is “let him be our ally.” This is the same faulty thinking of the Jews who wanted the Messiah to be an ally to alleviate the political and social injustices of their day and therefore, missed their greater need of salvation. Our Lord Jesus Christ condemned their leaders as those who stood in the path of salvation (Luke 13) and warned His disciples to have nothing to do with them (Matthew 16:6). What credit does the Scripture give those who proclaim a false gospel?

I also received a reply from Terry Taylor, the president of the Navigators. His reasoning is exactly the same as Dr. Dobson’s on the Covenant of Mutual Respect. He also stated that the Navigators do not support the ECT and then goes on to say:

Actually, we avoid taking a public stand on formulations such as this accord. The reason is primarily an issue of access. For The Navigators to remain fully available to God to sensitively pursue every opportunity to spread the Gospel, we feel we can’t normally take stands – for or against – documents of this nature. That has always been our policy.

Now, this may seem contradictory, but we have given our publishing arm, NavPress, a certain amount of freedom to join in the important discussions of our time. Briefly, the press’s aims are to: (1) engage readers with the Scriptures, (2) teach scriptural truth about various aspects of discipleship and the Christian life, and (3) open doors for further dialogue about the Gospel.

Keith Fournier’s book is a door-opening message. It’s not a teaching book.

Having benefited for many years by excellent materials produced by Navigators, this is a troubling response in a time when there is a great need for evangelical leaders to take a stand. Although Taylor desires to keep the

Navigators in the middle of the road, the publishing and promoting of Catholic Keith Fournier makes them supportive of the ECT. Fournier's book teaches a false view of salvation. It denies justification by faith and throws the door wide open for the reversal of the Reformation. Fournier is one of the main supporters and signers of the ECT. I am afraid Navigators' desire to be "fully available to God" makes them fully available to other things as well. What further dialogue do we need about the gospel?

We never received a response from Promise Keepers on "Redefining," but they too will declare the middle of the road on the ECT. We did receive an invitation to the Clergy Conference along with a challenge to defend why I would not attend. We wrote the speakers of the upcoming conference wanting to know their position on doctrine versus unity, justification by faith, and the definition of a Christian. Unity, as expected, ruled over any doctrinal division. Many of the responses were disturbing and further confirmed our reasons for not being a part of this movement.

Compromising the Gospel and the doctrine of justification by faith is moving forward at an alarming pace. Luther, Calvin, and the Reformers saw this as the issue on which the church stands or falls. This is, without question, the most serious problem ever faced by evangelicals and is clearly an evangelical problem.

Mike Gendron, Director of Proclaiming the Gospel, a ministry based in Dallas writes:

Your boldness in contending for the faith against the ever increasing attacks on the Gospel is a real encouragement to me. I am continuously having to defend my ministry outreach to Roman Catholics and most of the criticism comes from evangelicals.

Reformed theologian Dr. R. C. Sproul writes:

I must first speak to the spirit of your letter and of your document. It is written with a humble and troubled heart, and I am grateful to God for the kindness you display in your obvious distress at the responses to these important matters under discussion.

I believe you have concisely and fairly pointed out the matters that should be of the greatest concern to all Christians, and I don't understand people's indifference to these matters.

I am extremely grateful to you personally for a job well done. I pray God will use this document as a wake-up call to the evangelical world. I don't know how you could have been clearer.

May God give to you and your family the strength to survive the onslaught that will ensue because of what you have so well said in *The Redefining of a Christian*.

It is certainly my prayer that evangelical pastors and leaders will wake up to a burning desire to lay their ministry and life on the line for the Gospel and the doctrine of justification by faith. Having written several times to these men who head up the popular movements that sway the masses, I have come to this conclusion: like the mainline denominations at the turn of the century, there is no turning back. These men are moving and will continue to move the evangelical church toward ecumenism. It is not a question of whether the evangelical church will fall, it is only a question of when. The establishment of a one-world religion looms on the horizon. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The Reformers believed that the Gospel was essential for a church to be a true church. So does the Scripture. "Moody" magazine (January/February, 1996) reports that 49% of professing Christians agree that, "All good people, whether they consider Jesus Christ to be their Savior or not, will live in heaven after they die." Will this generation more than any other hear the words, "I never knew you, depart from Me?"

I wish to thank all of you for the great encouragement you have been to me. I apologize that because of the number of the calls and letters I have not been able to respond to each of you personally. As we stand together, may it always be in His grace and truth.

May I close with the words of a faithful brother who wrote me this week.

The many faces of ecumenism that plague the visible church today seem to testify of the nearness of our Lord's return. The most difficult battle seems to be to maintain, (and sometimes recall) the compassion for not only the lost but the deceived in the church. As you know, it is always the desire of natural man to hate, not only the enemy, but sadly even the brother who stumbles over the deceits of the true enemy. May God preserve our love for those who are even as we were, yet protect us from surrendering their only Hope which is in Christ Jesus our Redeemer.

Pastor Tom Watson  
January 26, 1996