

THE CURRENT END-TIME APOSTASY OF THE CHURCH

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There is little doubt that we are today in the midst of widespread apostasy. By that term we mean: Departure from the faith once for all delivered to the saints, for which we are to earnestly contend. I believe that apostates include two types of people:

- 1) Those who have knowingly turned completely from Christ and no longer even pretend to be Christians; and
- 2) Those who still claim to be Christians but have departed from the faith.

The latter would likewise be divided into two groups:

- a) Those who deliberately twist the Scriptures, perverting the gospel "to draw away disciples after them" or who endorse false teachers (though they know better) because they want to share their fame and power - or who simply want to be "positive" so as to "offend" no one; and
- b) The naïve, who are genuinely deceived by false prophets/teachers.

Apostasy, of course, in some measure, has existed as long as the church. (Most of the epistles involve, to some extent, correction of false doctrine and practice that was already in the early church in the days of the apostles.) It is the mushrooming, widespread incidence of the apostasy described under 2) above, however, among those who claim to be Christians, that I believe Scripture points to as a specific sign of the last days just prior to the Rapture.

The question, of course, must be faced whether today's apostasy (as this paper proposes) has anything to do with prophecies concerning the last days. If so, it would seem that this "sign of the last days" has been largely overlooked by many, if not most, prophecy teachers. They usually cite as "last-days signs" only "wars and rumors of wars nation shall rise against nation kingdom against kingdom famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes," unusual weather, the move to a cashless society, the revival of the Roman Empire, etc.

I have been criticized for years by those who complain, "Deal with prophecy, if you wish, but stick to your subject-don't mix in apostasy!" In fact, one cannot adequately deal with the former while ignoring the latter. When asked by His disciples, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world," the first words from Christ identified apostasy as the foremost sign of the last days. In His response, He emphasized religious deception three times-and He specified what it would involve:

Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Christ's warning made several things clear:

- 1) The major sign of the nearness of His coming would be religious deception by professing Christian leaders;
- 2) A central feature of the deception would be false prophets showing "great signs and wonders," which, though convincing, would also be false;
- 3) The repetition of the word, "many," indicated that this religious deception would be widespread, apparently worldwide; and
- 4) The words Christs, prophets, signs and wonders, and elect indicated that the deception would be among professing Christians, i.e., inside the church.

This warning was echoed by Jude. The first reason he gave why we must "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints" was the fact that "there are certain men crept in (inside the church) unawares ungodly men turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

"False Christs"?! There have been many in our day (from Jim Jones to David Koresh), who gathered followers by claiming to be Christ. There are numerous gurus in India who claim to be the latest reincarnation of Jesus Christ. The false "Christs" presented by novels, videos, and movies have multiplied since Jesus Christ Superstar beyond reciting. None is even close to the true Jesus Christ of Scripture. The "Jesus" of The DaVinci Code is a complete fraud dreamed up by atheists. The "Jesus" of the ABC-TV presentation of Judas confessed to Judas that he "blew it" in chasing the moneychangers out of the Temple: "I lost my temper."

That Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ received almost universal praise as "biblically accurate" from solid evangelical leaders is another indication of apostasy that has crept into the best pulpits unawares. In fact, it was almost all unbiblical. Christ stomping on a huge serpent slithering into Gethsemane, and Satan tempting him there; Pilate's wife giving linens to the two Marys to wipe up Christ's blood; Jesus knocked off a bridge on the way to the cross, where he dangles from a chain and confronts Judas hiding beneath it; Saint Veronica giving her veil to Christ to wipe his face, and the image of his face remaining on it as the first icon; a raven plucking out the eye of one thief on an adjoining cross; the endless beatings by Roman soldiers, giving the impression that Christ suffered more physically than any other person, and that his physical sufferings (which could only condemn us) paid for our sins; not a hint that "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" - all of this and more was unbiblical, much of it from the visions of a mystic nun or devices from the imagination of the director to arouse emotions. Nor did anyone seem disturbed that a sinful man was pretending to be the One who declared, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and whom Paul described as "God manifest in the flesh."

The most prominent false Christ today is Sun Myung Moon, who openly declares that he is the Messiah come to earth to complete the mission Jesus failed to accomplish: establish the "perfect family." Yet some prominent evangelicals have spoken at conferences convened by Moon, sharing the platform that featured the man who says he is perfecting the work "left unaccomplished by Jesus."

But what is the faith, a departure from which marks one as an apostate? Some might say that as long as

a person believes that Christ died for his sins, was buried, and rose the third day, he is saved. But that declaration does not express the true gospel. As defined by Paul, the gospel declares the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ according to the Scriptures. Surely that involves who the biblical God is, who the biblical Christ is, what the biblical problem between God and man is, the biblical and only means of man's forgiveness by God, and the eternal consequences as taught in the Bible for those who reject the biblical gospel. None of these is a peripheral point of doctrine to be ignored or compromised. To do so would be a departure from the faith into apostasy to proclaim a false gospel.

The entire Word of God, of course, is foundational to the faith. The Bible is one book and it is all interrelated, every part to every other. Sadly, the church and world are being robbed of the pure Word of God-and by those who claim to be evangelical Christians. Eugene Peterson's *The Message* (NavPress, 1993) is one example. Instead of "that the world through him might be saved," *The Message* says, "He came to help, to put the world right again." That sounds like social and political action, the same old "social gospel," downgrading salvation to earthly improvement, and it is found throughout this entire "version" of Scripture. John 3:31 says, "He that cometh from above is above all." *The Message* says, "The One who comes from above is head and shoulders over other messengers from God." First Peter 5:10 says that God has "called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus." *The Message* says God "will have you put together and on your feet." What Peterson has done to God's Word is blasphemous!

Peterson dares to change the words and meaning of Scripture! Hebrews 11:4 declares, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," but *The Message* says, "It was what he believed, not what he brought, that made the difference." Obviously, both belief and action are important and interdependent. Moreover, Peterson has robbed his readers of the major theme of Scripture: the Lamb slain for our redemption.

Men like Peterson have no conscience about changing what God says, replacing His words with their own. Yet *The Message* is quoted more than 80 times by Rick Warren in *The Purpose-Driven Life*, which has now sold about 26 million copies, unprecedented in history. No greater promotion of this mass of heresy could be given than Warren's endorsement! Sadly, this huge bestseller quotes paraphrases far more than it quotes the Bible, encouraging a growing trend of departure from the words of God ("thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart"-Jeremiah 15:16) to misrepresentations thereof coming out of men's imaginations. This is exactly what God condemns two chapters earlier.

Yet Peterson's *Message* is also praised by other Christian leaders such as J. I. Packer, Warren Wiersbe, Jack W. Hayford, and Richard Foster. Peterson is "Consulting Editor, New Testament," for the *Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2005) edited by Richard J. Foster. A host of "scholars" contributed commentaries, among them Bruce Demarest, Professor of Theology at Denver Seminary in Denver, CO; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton, MA; Tremper Longman III, the Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies at Westmont College, Santa Barbara, CA; Earl F. Palmer, on the Board of Trustees of the long-apostate Princeton Theological Seminary and senior pastor of University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, WA, and many others. The *Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible* was touted as "THE BIBLE AS IT WAS INTENDED TO BE" in a two-thirds-page ad in the July 2005 issue of *Christianity Today*, next to the masthead declaring that Billy Graham was the founder (of CT) and that James I. Packer is one of the Executive Editors. It is odd that Richard Foster and some 50 "biblical scholars" would go to the trouble to create and publish this "Bible," considering the fact that Eugene Peterson, its New Testament editor, has said, "Why do people spend so much time studying the Bible? Christians should be studying it less, not

more. I'm just not at all pleased with all the emphasis on Bible study as if it's some kind of special thing that Christians do, and the more they do the better."

Showing the apostate contempt of these men for God's Word, the Renovare explanatory notes (bringing to evangelicals the old "higher criticism" of 150 years ago and still popular among liberals today) deny the Divine authorship of much of Scripture—even that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Yet the Introduction hypocritically declares, "we read the Bible literally, from cover to cover and in context." Renovare cynically declares that Genesis 1-11 is neither historic nor scientific, and that the entire book of Genesis is merely a collection of myths:

Genesis began as an oral tradition of narrative stories passed down from generation to generation. As these stories were remembered and retold again and again, they took on theological meaning. Over time what began as stories told were written down and collected together (Genesis 12-50), and a prologue (Genesis 1-11) was added. From this rich oral tradition many different kinds of literary material came to make up this book of beginnings. Borrowing from other creation accounts stories with parallels to ancient Near Eastern religious narrative and mythology were reshaped with monotheistic intent. These strands of varied materials were gathered and edited into the written text.

Of Daniel, the Renovare Bible declares, "We do not know who wrote it or exactly when it was written it was most likely partially written during Antiochus Epiphanes' persecution of the Jews in Babylon, which began with the desecration of the Temple in 167 BC." So it is the work of an imposter pretending to be Daniel 400 years too late! Apparently overlooked is the fact that perhaps a century before Antiochus, the Greek Septuagint was translated from even earlier Hebrew manuscripts, and it contains the book of Daniel as we have it today.

The Renovare "scholars" continually downplay the powerful Old Testament prophecies of Christ upon which the gospel is based, and which are the foundation of the faith committed to and preached by the apostles. The key prophecy in Isaiah 9:6-7 of the coming Messiah, who is "The mighty God, The everlasting Father," is said to speak of "human agents." They reduce Isaiah's prophecies to "tradition," would have us believe that much of it was not written by Isaiah (there are "Three" authors), and even deny that chapter 53 prophesies Christ's sacrifice for our sins! Renovare describes Isaiah as "poetic imagination interpretive imagination Isaiah imagines," etc. The Renovare "scholars" declare: "The prophets of Israel are not to be thought of primarily as predictors of the future they were poets." Through poetry, Jeremiah attempts "to make sense of the events of his day." This is blasphemy!

The powerful prophetic promise from God in Jeremiah 31:8-14 to bring home the Jews scattered around the world is interpreted as a promise to all homeless people (nothing about Israel) and God's promise that Israel can never be destroyed (31:35-37) is ignored! Israel is treated as having been replaced by the church.

How does this relate to departure from "the faith once delivered to the saints"? The Messiah doesn't step off of a UFO and say, "Voila! Here I am!" He comes in fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies and with a genealogy that proves His authentic identity. Israel takes up most of the Bible, and its history and its prophets' inspired pronouncements are foundational to the Messiah's identity. If the Bible is not 100 percent true in what it says about Israel, then we cannot believe what else it says about Christ and our "redemption through his blood."

Incredibly, the valley of dry bones brought back to life in Ezekiel 37, which is clearly declared to be "the whole house of Israel," is interpreted as the birth of the church at Pentecost. The marriage of the

Lamb to His bride in Revelation 19 is not a real event in heaven but "symbolic of the many different celebrations that bring joy and jubilation" into our lives." The thousand-year reign of Christ in Revelation 20 is not a real event, and the armies of the world coming against Christ and the saints at Jerusalem after Satan's release merely symbolize "the armies of darkness which surround us."

If this "trashing" of the Bible, endorsed by many leading evangelicals and tolerated without opposition from others, is not part of the apostasy, then what is? We are losing the Bible in many ways, raising a generation on the spiritual junk food of religious videos, movies, youth entertainment, and comic book paraphrases of the Bible. The Word of God is being rewritten, dumbed down, and dramatized in order to cater to the tastes of the carnal mind.

The emphasis throughout Scripture is always on the words. The Bible is not a picture book! We are to live by "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God," a fact so important that Christ quoted it to Satan in His temptation. But the Bible is today being "improved" by script writers, movie directors, and actors who are replacing the actual "incorruptible word of God" by which we are "born again," with dramatic representations (the entire New Testament is now on video) that may soon be the only "Bible" youth know.

The Roman Catholic Church has been in full-blown apostasy for 1,300 years while persecuting and killing true Christians. It has never repented of this evil and is now enjoying the support of leading evangelicals in a way that would have shocked biblical Christians only 50 years ago. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) brought together the leading bishops and cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church in order to counter the Reformation. The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent contain more than 100 anathemas condemning every point of the true gospel and damning to hell those who believe it. For example: "If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law (Catholic rituals) are not necessary for salvation but men obtain from God through faith alone the grace of justification let him be anathema"; "If anyone says that baptism is not necessary for salvation, let him be anathema"; "If anyone says that in the Mass a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God but a mere commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross and not a propitiatory one let him be anathema."

On December 31, 1995, honoring the 450th anniversary of the opening of Trent, Pope John Paul II declared that its anathemas are still in full force: "Its conclusions maintain all their value." Yet Billy Graham - like those signing ECT - has declared that Rome preaches the same gospel he does.

Those who deny purgatory, where Rome says that in spite of Christ's "It is finished!" one must suffer in flames for one's sins, and those who deny the power of indulgences in shortening one's time of purgatorial suffering, are anathematized by Rome to this day. Yet, in *The Body*, Charles Colson denied that indulgences are still offered by Rome. I sent him a copy of the seventeen pages on "the revision on indulgences" from Vatican II including Pope Paul's anathema pronounced upon those who deny that the church has the power to grant indulgences today. Colson never responded to acknowledge his error, which has led multitudes astray-and, unless it was done recently, did not correct it in subsequent editions. Isn't this apostasy?

In Augsburg, Germany, on October 31, 1999, representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and of the Roman Catholic Church signed a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), the fruit of 30 years of dialogue between Lutheran and Catholic theologians. (If justification by faith is that complicated, who can be saved? Paul didn't need 30 years to answer the Philippian jailer's question of how to be saved!) The choice of the city where the Augsburg Confession (foundation of Lutheranism ever since) was read, and the very day of the month on which, in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95

theses to the Wittenburg door, could hardly be coincidence. The Reformation was being overturned! Indeed, Charles Colson has said that "justification by faith alone doesn't mean today among evangelicals what it meant in the reformers' time."

For 1 billion Roman Catholics, nothing has changed. Catholics continue to pray to Mary for salvation, to wear her scapular (as John Paul did from childhood to his death), which declares, "Whosoever dies wearing this scapular shall not suffer eternal fire. Mary's promise." To wear that in reliance upon such a promise would be an abomination to any true Christian. Yet it is worn by tens of millions of Catholics. They continue to believe that "the merits and graces Christ won on the cross" can be received only in small installments that can never fully save and come only through the sacraments of the Church by Mary's agency, and they must therefore still offer good works and suffering for salvation-finally in purgatory.

The very doctrine of indulgences that angered Luther and sparked the Reformation remains a mainstay of Catholicism. (How can Colson be so wrong?) In fact, shortly after JDDJ was signed, John Paul II offered new indulgences for the "Jubilee Year of 2000": give up cigarettes for one day and receive a plenary indulgence; walk through one of the four "holy doors" the Pope opened for that year in Rome, and receive a plenary indulgence (Catholic pilgrims came by the millions to do so, ignorant that Christ is the only door to eternal life!), etc.

When the Pope opened his eyes and rose from praying on his knees in front of the first "holy door" he opened (this one at St. Peter's), he saw George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, spiritual head of the Church of England, kneeling in agreement beside him. Doesn't this denial of the gospel by Carey qualify as full-blown apostasy?

John Paul II boasted that pilgrimages to Rome for plenary indulgences began in 1300 under Pope Boniface VIII, of "blessed memory," a "pope" who had both a mother and her daughter among his many mistresses and who gave indulgences to his troops to destroy the historic city of Palestrina, slaughtering its 6,000 inhabitants and reducing it to a plowed field, which was sown with salt. Yet Boniface was hardly the most evil of the popes whom the present pope looks proudly upon as Peter's successors who have handed that authority down to him. In 1302, Boniface issued the "infallible Bull," *Unam Sanctam*, making absolute allegiance to the Pope a condition of salvation-still in full force today.

Martin Luther said, "We are not the first to declare the papacy to be the kingdom of Antichrist, since for many years before us so many and so great men have undertaken to express the same thing so clearly." But it is no longer fashionable in "Protestant" circles to state the truth. We must only be "positive" for fear of giving offense, forgetting the far greater offense of condoning a false gospel that is sending hundreds of millions to hell. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association received the rights to publish a special "Crusade Edition" of Halley's Bible Handbook and, in doing so, removed from it everything Halley had so carefully researched and documented of the evil of the Popes and the slaughter of true Christians through the centuries. If this cover-up to avoid "offending" Catholics is not contributing to apostasy, then what is?

Zondervan published a revised version of the Handbook in 2000, which also contains no reference in its index to Albigenses, Waldenses and other evangelical Christians slaughtered by Rome by the millions. This new version declares: "The Roman Catholic Church responded to the Protestant Reformation by reforming and renewing itself worked toward ecumenism during the latter half of the 20th century and has engaged in cooperative ventures with evangelicals and fundamentalists. There are Catholics whose theology is virtually indistinguishable from evangelical theology the charismatic

movement crossed over the theological dividing lines as the Holy Spirit began to work in the Catholic Church, creating a unity with other believers that could not have been achieved with theological debates."

What a perverted promotion of apostasy! When challenged about this, Stan Gundry, Vice President and Editor-in-Chief responded, "The purpose of the rewriting was not to cover up the ugly truth about traditional RCC belief but to give a more balanced portrayal of the history of Christianity." How could white-washing essential facts of official Catholic doctrine and practice, and leaving out the slaughter of millions of Christians by the Roman Catholic Church give a "more balanced" history?!

Incredibly, Zondervan is now in anti-Christian hands. It is owned by FOX News, which is owned by Rupert Murdoch. He has been knighted by the Pope as a member of the Pontifical Order of St. Gregory the Great after donating \$10 million for construction of a new Catholic cathedral in Los Angeles. Murdoch has consistently made TV shows aimed at destroying the family and pursues his godless ambitions through a vast empire, of which "Christian publishing" has become one part.

Aren't such ungodly alliances one sign of apostasy?

Christian publishers began to put profits ahead of sound doctrine, made a lot of money by compromising in order to give customers what they wanted instead of the biblical truth they needed, then sold out to the world monetarily as they already had spiritually. Is this not part of the "end-time apostasy of the church," the major sign Christ gave of the nearness of His return?

For at least 50 years, Billy Graham has affirmed Roman Catholicism as the true gospel and has sent Roman Catholics who come forward at his crusades back to the Catholic churches they had left. Billy has praised John Paul II as a preacher of the true gospel, has declared that he and the Pope agree on almost everything, and has hailed Bishop Fulton Sheen as the "greatest communicator of the 20th century." Though Sheen preached a false gospel, claimed to turn a wafer into Christ and to offer Him repeatedly in a propitiatory sacrifice for sins, Billy thanked him for their "common commitment to evangelism" and expressed his gratitude to Sheen "for his ministry and his focus on Christ." Yet Sheen's hope of heaven was that Mary would let him in because of his 40 pilgrimages to Marian shrines at Fatima and Lourdes. When Sheen died, Billy said, "I mourn his death and look forward to our reunion in heaven."

J. I. Packer, a signatory to ECT, who called John Paul II "a fine Christian man," had many years earlier declared, "Catholics are among the most loyal and virile brothers evangelicals can find these days." Likewise John Stott said, "Evangelicals should join others in the Church of England in working toward full communion with the Roman Catholic Church."

Manifestations of apostasy are legion and subversive. There are evangelical leaders who generally preach the true gospel, yet they commend, approve of, and praise those who clearly deny the gospel. Are they not contributing to apostasy? What could be the difference between leading multitudes to embrace a false gospel by preaching it oneself or leading them to believe a false gospel by commending those who preach it? Is it any less damaging to souls for Billy Graham to praise and endorse Norman Vincent Peale, Robert Schuller, Pope John Paul II, and others who preach a false gospel than to preach it himself? Would not one approach contribute as much to apostasy and the eternal doom of souls as the other?

In 1984, on the Phil Donahue program, Peale said, "It's not necessary to be born again. You have your way to God; I have mine. I found eternal peace in a Shinto shrine." Shocked, Donahue responded, "But

you're a Christian minister; you're supposed to tell me that Christ is the way and the truth and the life, aren't you?" Peale replied, "Christ is one of the ways. God is everywhere."

Peale also declared, "God is energy. As you breathe God in, as you visualize His energy, you will be reenergized." "Just as there exist scientific techniques for the release of atomic energy, so are there scientific procedures for the release of spiritual energy through the mechanism of prayer." "Any method through which you can stimulate the power of God is legitimate any scientific use of prayer."

Yet Billy Graham praised Peale many times, endorsed his books, even declaring in an interview on national TV that he knew no one who had done more good for the cause of Christ than Ruth and Norman Peale. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to find anyone who had done more harm to the gospel! Based upon Billy's endorsements, how many souls followed Peale's false gospel into hell? Surely this is at least contributing to apostasy!

Billy Graham likewise endorsed and praised Robert Schuller, though his denials of the gospel are no less clear and reprehensible than Peale's. Schuller has defined sin as "lack of faith in yourself. Jesus Christ has saved me from my sin which is my tendency to put myself down and not believe that I can do it negative thinking is the core of sin Jesus died to change us from negative thinking to positive thinking He bore the cross to sanctify your self-esteem the cross will sanctify the ego trip!"

Beginning 50 years ago, Billy Graham has repeatedly declared that his beliefs are "essentially the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics we only differ on some matters of later church tradition." He praised Pope John Paul II for "his strong Catholic faith" and called him "the greatest moral and spiritual leader of the last 100 years. I don't know anyone else that I could put as high as he is. He's traveled the whole world spreading the Catholic faith. And I've admired him. He and I agree on almost everything." Isn't it apostasy for the leading evangelical to praise the Pope for spreading a false gospel and damnable heresies?

Do we no longer believe that "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation"? How then can we possibly condone and even praise those who preach a false gospel? Nor can it be denied that the Roman Catholic Church is dedicated to destroying the gospel that saves. If its members believed the true gospel, that Church would be out of business!

The Pope and his entire Church reject the biblical truth that Christ paid the full penalty for sin once and for all on the Cross. At the very heart of Catholicism is the lie that a wafer is turned into Christ to be endlessly sacrificed for sin in the Mass, that infant baptism makes one a child of God, and that no one can be certain of heaven. New York's Cardinal O'Connor declared: "Church teaching is that I don't know...what my eternal future will be. Pope John Paul II doesn't know absolutely that he will go to heaven, nor does Mother Teresa of Calcutta." Cardinal John Krol, as spiritual leader of Philadelphia's more than a million Catholics, admitted that his personal major worry was about "getting to heaven." There could be no clearer denial of the biblical gospel with its promise of eternal life for all who believe. Yet Billy Graham boasted of his friendship with Roman Catholic leaders and expressed only approval, never once warning those who believe Rome's false gospel that they are lost. Instead of obeying Jude's injunction to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," Billy Graham has never raised a voice against heretical denials of the true faith. Charles Dullea, Jesuit Superior of Rome's Pontifical Biblical Institute, urged Catholics to attend Graham's crusades because "A Catholic will hear no slighting of his Church's teaching authority, nor of papal or Episcopal prerogatives, no word against Mass or Sacraments or Catholic practice." Indeed, Graham called the Mass "a very beautiful thing and certainly straight and clear in the gospel I believe." He has recommended Catholic books and literature, including a biography of Pope John XXIII (whom Billy

commended for his ecumenical stand), which he called "a classic in devotion" and that contained page after page of John XXIII's devotion to Mary and the Saints, worship of the host and trust in the sacraments for salvation.

It is indisputable that John Paul II, whom evangelicals have praised, trusted Mary instead of Christ for his eternal destiny. In a February 1980 addendum to his Last Will and Testament of March 6, 1979, John Paul II entrusted "that decisive moment of death to the Mother of Christ and of the Church and of my hope. In life and in death, Totus Tuus through the Immaculate." Embroidered inside all of his robes was the phrase, Totus tuus sum Maria, "Mary I am all yours." His Apostolic Letter of Oct. 16, 2002, ended with these words:

O Blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain which unites us to God, bond of love which unites us to the angels, tower of salvation against the assaults of Hell, safe port in our universal shipwreck, we will never abandon you. You will be our comfort in the hour of death: yours our final kiss as life ebbs away. And the last word from our lips will be your sweet name, O Queen of the Rosary of Pompei, O dearest Mother, O Refuge of Sinners, O Sovereign Consoler of the Afflicted.

In "The Holy Father's Prayer for the Marian Year," John Paul II asked Mary to do what only God can do: to comfort, guide, strengthen and protect "the whole of humanity." His prayer ended, "Sustain us, O Virgin Mary, on our journey of faith and obtain for us the grace of eternal salvation." She would have to be God to do so. Yet like Graham, Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptists' Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, emphasized that any disagreements Protestants may have had "with John Paul II are irrelevant to the foundations of the faith." Land praised the Pope's "staunch defense of traditional Christian faith." Pat Robertson enthused, "Pope John Paul II stands like a rock in his clear enunciation of the foundational principles of the Christian faith." In his 1994 video, Pope John Paul II: Startling Revelations, Jack Van Impe hailed the Pope as a staunch Christian and defender of the faith. On his television program, he claimed that the Catechism of the Catholic Church is biblical. Popes are the worst of apostates, condoning all religions so long as they submit to papal authority, and leading billions of souls to hell! What must be said of evangelicals who commend the popes and their false gospel? Is it not apostasy to promote those who preach a false gospel and damnable heresies even though one does not preach such lies oneself?

One of the major marks of the "last days" apostasy has been an ecumenical movement led by John Paul II that has swept even evangelicals into its maelstrom. Ecumenism is one more form of the denial of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which "is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Robert Schuller exhorted "religious leaders whatever their theology to articulate their faith in positive terms." He called for a "massive, united effort by leaders of all religions to proclaim the positive power of world-community-building religious values."

In his 1992 book, *The Body*, Chuck Colson called for ecumenical union with Rome. In an article titled, "Why Catholics are Our Allies," he wrote: "And let's be certain that we are firing our polemical rifles against the enemies, not allies fighting in the trenches alongside us in the defense of the Truth." It would be shocking to Calvin, Luther, Zwingli and the other Reformers (and especially to the millions Rome tortured and slaughtered for their faith in Christ) to learn that the enemies of the gospel were actually their allies "in defense of the Truth"!

One of these strange "allies" is apparently Roman Catholic apologist Peter Kreeft of Boston College who, in the spirit of Rick Warren and his P.E.A.C.E. Plan, advocates a coalition of all religions to fight society's social ills. Kreeft imagines that prayer to Islam's Allah or any Hindu idol is compatible with Christianity. He praises John Paul II for gathering "representatives of all the major religions" to pray together and declaring that they all pray to the same God. He claims that God is blessing Islam to grow

because Muslims are obeying His laws. Confucius is God's "prophet" in purgatory on the way to heaven; Buddha and Muhammad are both already there; Muhammad, because he honored Mary, is "closer in spirit" to true Christianity than most Protestants; through the Mass, the entire universe is being transformed into one giant Cosmic Eucharistic Christ; and everyone, including evangelicals, will be united in the Eucharist and Mary. That both J.I. Packer and Chuck Colson gave their enthusiastic endorsements on the back cover tells us much of the nature of today's apostasy.