

## **ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No, 137**

**“Is the Catholic Church Poised to lead the World?”**

**By Marcus Sheffield, Ph.D.**

**Professor of English at Southern Adventist University**

**Creator of the web site called AdventCry: A Defense of the Reformation in the Time of the End at [www.adventcry.org](http://www.adventcry.org)**

### **EDITORIAL**

**Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.**

**Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University**

Greetings from England, where I have spent two delightful weeks speaking at five rallies held in Milton Keynes, Willesden, Luton, Reading, and Peckham. Our largest gathering was in Luton, a city 50 miles from London. An old but impressive Methodist Church was rented to accommodate the 700 plus members and friends who attended the SABBATH/ADVENT seminar.

During the past few years I have been invited to speak in England over 20 times. This was my second trip to London this year. Next November I am scheduled to go back for the third time this year to speak at a rally of churches in Bristol and London.

Two reasons bring me back frequently to London. First, it is the marvelous the reception and response of our believers and friends who attend the seminars. Most of our members of the South England Conference are immigrant from the West Indies, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Ghana, South Africa, Romania, Philippines, and Latin-American countries. They have come to England to advance their education and to work hard to achieve a better future. They are highly motivated people determine to succeed by God's grace. They bring to their local churches the same degree of commitment to the study and sharing of biblical truths. They greatly appreciate the efforts of a Bible scholar to open their mind to the deeper understanding and experience of Bible truths.

The second factor that makes my visits to London pleasurable, is the Bed and Breakfast service provided by a charming Adventist Arminian professional couple, Gary and Araxi Keshishian. They not only offer me

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a nice room, a view of a manicured garden, good food, and high speed wireless internet, but also a warm hospitality. They treat me as a member of their family, often inviting me to have supper with them. Truly I can say that their home has become my home when away from home. The only difference is that I cannot kiss the lady of the house. If your travels brings you to London, feel free to call them and make a reservation. Their phone number is (0)20 8866 8821 and their email gary@advent.plus.com The house is conveniently located near Heathrow airport and half a mile away from the subway. You can see a picture of the house and room at my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/BED&BREAKFAST.htm>

### **A WORD OF INTRODUCTION ABOUT MARCUS SHEFFIELD'S ESSAY**

This newsletter may take our regular readers by surprise because I promised to share my research on THE ROOTS OF TERRORISM. Rest assured that I have not forgotten my promise. I am still researching this subject and I will be posting my findings in a forthcoming newsletter. The problem is time. The extensive traveling and lecturing in different parts of the world, hardly allows the blocks of time needed for reflective research and writings. Moreover I find myself constantly challenged by new developments.

For example, the unprecedented devastation of the Gulf Coast areas caused by Katrina and Rita, are causing many thinking Bible students to ask: What is the Lord telling us in His prophetic Word about the intensification of natural disasters we are witnessing today? I feel that this is a timely question that can hardly be ignored. Thus, I have started doing some reading and thinking on the prophetic significance of Endtime natural and man-made disasters. Hopefully, I will have some thoughts to share for the next newsletter.

Some argue that God used Katrina to stop the annual "Southern Decadence" celebration that was supposed to start just days after Katrina struck New Orleans. This annual event was to bring to the city over 150,000 gay and lesbians from all over the world. They have a history of

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engaging in sex acts in the public streets and bars of the French Quarter. Hurricane Katrina has put an end this year to the annual celebration of sin.

Katrina is seen by some as a modern day divine judgment similar to that inflicted upon Sodom and Gomorrah. This restrictive view poses some problems. Why did God choose to punish New Orleans rather than Las Vegas, known as the “Sin City” par excellence? Moreover, why did Katrina damaged extensively the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Bass Memorial Adventist Academy, and several Adventist churches, while leaving practically untouched the French Quarter of New Orleans, which is the center of sexual perversion? Did God miss the target as it sometimes happens with guided missiles? Mature reflection calls for a more satisfactory explanation for the intensification of natural disasters we are experiencing today. This subject will be explored in the next newsletter.

For this newsletter I decided to post an essay I recently received from Marcus Sheffield, Ph.D., Professor of English at Southern Adventist University. He has created a web site called AdventCry: A Defense of the Reformation in the Time of the End at [www.adventcry.org](http://www.adventcry.org). It is a web ministry that features short articles aimed at a non-Adventist audience. Some of his articles offer insightful analysis of current events from a prophetic perspective. You will find Sheffield’s essay posted in this newsletter a pleasure to read because of its gripping style and perceptive comments.

In many ways, Sheffield’s essay expands my reflections on our Adventist prophetic understanding of the endtime prophetic role of the papacy. You will find my analysis in newsletters No. 128, 129, 130. All of them can be accessed at my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/endtimeissues/>

Our prophetic endtime scenario of the papacy was largely developed by our pioneers over a century ago. But since then significant changes have occurred in the strategy used by the papacy to become the most influential religious and political power in the world today. In the light of these changes, it is imperative for us to reexamine the strategy of the Catholic Church to influence the social, political, and religious life of many nations, including the USA.

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In my previous newsletters we examined the political, social, ecclesiastical, and ecumenical achievements of Pope John Paul II. We noted that politically, John Paul II played a major role in the collapse of Soviet Communism, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Eastern and Western Europe.

Ecclesiastically, John Paul II has worked tirelessly to restore unity, and identity to the Catholic Church. To accomplish this goal, he has used a twofold strategy. First, he has endeavored to win the confidence of Catholics to himself by utilizing effectively all the modern means of communication. Second, he has sold with holy conviction to Catholics his unpopular stand against divorce and remarriage, artificial birth control, extramarital sex, homosexuality, abortion, optional celibacy and ordination of women as priests.

Ecumenically, John Paul II has fostered his role as the moral and spiritual leader of mankind. To achieve this goal, he has traveled more than all the previous popes of history put together, in order to promote ecumenical understanding and cooperation among people of all religions under the moral and spiritual leadership of the papacy. To gain global acceptance, John Paul has willing to ask forgiveness for the past sins committed by the Catholic Church against the Moslem, Protestants, Jews, and Greek Orthodox. The new pope, Benedict XVI, has already shown his determination to follow the ecumenical, ecclesiastical, and political goals of his predecessor.

In his perceptive essay, Prof. Sheffield offers significant insights on how American political and religious leaders are facilitating the advancement of the Catholic Church, by embracing a syncretistic form of Christianity that ultimately rejects the fundamental tenets of the Reformation. Doctrinal differences between Protestantism and Catholicism are largely being ignored for the sake of political unity. Unfortunately, it is a unity achieved largely on Catholic terms.

I took the liberty to change the title of Sheffield's essay from "The Aims of the Roman Catholic Church" to "Is the Catholic Church Poised to Lead the World?" I feel that the new title expresses better the intent of the essay. . For any question or comment, feel free to contact Prof. Sheffield at [msheff@southern.edu](mailto:msheff@southern.edu). He will be glad to hear from you.

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**TIMELY ARTICLES WELCOMED!**

If you, or someone you know, have written perceptive articles on relevant issues from a biblical perspective, feel free to email them to me. I will be glad to evaluate them for possible publication in our newsletter. On several occasions I have posted essays from Adventist scholars. Hopefully, many more articles from different authors will be published in the future. Since this newsletter reaches over 30,000 subscribers of different educational level, the challenge is to write profound thoughts in a popular style. Thank you for considering my request.

**HOW TO SUBSCRIBE OR UNSUBSCRIBE!**

Every day I receive numerous requests to subscribe to our **END-TIME ISSUES NEWSLETTERS**. Some submit the email addresses of friends or relatives who wish to subscribe. Thank you for sharing these newsletters with your church members and friends. The procedure to subscribe or unsubscribe is very simple. Just write in the subject line **SUBSCRIBE ME** or **UNSUBSCRIBE ME**, and I will promptly add or remove your address.

**HOW TO INVITE ME FOR A WEEKEND SEMINAR IN 2006?**

If your church is interested to invite me next year to present one of my PowerPoint seminars on the **SABBATH, SECOND ADVENT, or CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE**, feel free to contact me at this time. You can call me at (269) 471-2915 or email me your request at sbacchiocchi@qtm.net I will email you the open dates and the outline of the three PowerPoint seminars. At this time I am setting up my 2006 calendar of speaking engagements and I would be glad to include your church. If your church is small, there is the possibility of rallying together the district churches. Every weekend capacity crowds attend these timely seminars in the USA and overseas.

**UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS**

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the month of October and November

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2005. During the month of September I will speak at four major rallies in London, England. It is always a privilege and pleasure for me to ministers to our fellow believers in England. The reception and response is always very encouraging. I wish to extend my personal, warm invitation to all who are able to attend one of the followings rallies.

**OCTOBER 1: TORONTO –DOWNSVIEW SDA CHURCH**

Location: 37 Bakersfield Street, Downsview, ON M3J 1Z4, Canada

For directions and information call Pastor Ken Campbell at (905) 824-7015.

**OCTOBER 14-15: WASHINGTON-SPENCERVILLE KOREAN SDA CHURCH**

Location: 1700 Spencerville Road, Spencerville, MD 20868

For directions and information call Pastor Doh Hyunsok at (301) 776-3285

**OCTOBER 21-22: SARASOTA SDA CHURCH**

Location: 5764 Churchill Downs Road, Sarasota, Florida 34241

For directions and information call Pastor Andrew Adams at (941) 359-0232 or (941) 356-7001.

**OCTOBER 28-29: SAN DIEGO – VISTA SDA CHURCH**

Location: 7120 Alta Vista Drive, Vista, California 92084

For directions and information call Pastor Rudoy Pavel at (760) 757-8240

**NOVEMBER 4-5: ORLANDO – APOPKA SDA CHURCH**

Location: 340 East Votaw Road, Apopka, Florida 32703

For directions and information call Pastor Haskell Williams at (407) 383-7250

**NOVEMBER 11-12: BRISTOL CENTRAL SDA CHURCH**

Location: 31-35 Lower Ashley Road, St. Pauls, Bristol, England.

For directions and information call Pastor Richard Daly at 01452 423 089 or 07958 433744

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**NOVEMBER 18-19: LONDON, ENGLAND –TOTENHAM SDA CHURCH**

Location: 255 West Green Road, London N15, England.

For direction and information call Pastor Nicu Buitoi at 0781 622 7909. He is the new Pastor of the Romanian and Green Acres Totenham SDA churches and is arranging for a rally of several churches

**NOVEMBER 25-26: NEW YORK CITY – NEW HAVEN TEMPLE SDA CHURCH**

Location: 634 Prospect Place, Brooklyn, NY 11216.

For directions and information call Pastor Allan Hay at (516) 334-6339 or (516) 225-7897.

**A SABBATH EXPERIENCE**

Pastor Eddie Garrett II, Th. D., is the son of a Baptist minister. He earned a Doctor of Theology Degree and has served as a Baptist pastor himself for several years. He has authored several books and articles. I have in front of me his book SAVATION, THE LAW AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD, where he presents in a compelling way the continuation between Judaism and Christianity.

In a private letter Dr. Garrett explain how the reading of my book THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE helped him to accept the Sabbath. This was a costly decision. He left his large Baptist church to start a fellowship of Sabbathkeepers in his own home.

On October 21-22, Dr. Garrett and members of his fellowship will join us in worship and fellowship at the Sarasota SDA Church. On Sabbath afternoon, prior to my final lecture on Sabbath, Dr. Garrett will briefly share his testimony of how the Lord led him to accept the Sabbath and how Sabbath observance has impacted his life and ministry. I look forward to hear his testimony and to dialogue with him in the evening after the meeting (hopefully) in an Olive Garden restaurant (if one exists in Sarasota). If you live close to Sarasota, you are welcomed to join us for an informative and inspiring time together on October 21-22. For directions and information call Pastor Andrew Adams at (941) 359-0232 or (941) 356-7001.

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS TO BE KEPT SHORT**

Several subscribers have counseled me to keep the announcements short in the newsletter, offering instead all the details of each special offer through an URL link to my website. If for some reasons the link does not work, contact me by email [sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com), and I will email you the details of each special offer.

**TOSHIBA LAP TOP COMPUTERS FOR ADVENTISTS**

In the last newsletter I announced the special deal that TOSHIBA has given to Adventists on two of their professional laptops models, called TECRA. The response has been so overwhelming that TOSHIBA has oversold the TECRA S2 models. Fortunately I was able to receive a smaller order of laptops to cover me until the end of October when the new shipment arrives. If you are looking for an outstanding TOSHIBA laptop at a bargain price, visit my website at <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Toshiba/Notebooks.html> If you cannot surf the web, feel free to call us at 269-471-2915 or email us a message at <[sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com)>.

**INCREDIBLE NEW OFFERS ON HITACHI PROJECTORS**

Lately HITACHI has called me several times offering me to buy some of the projector models in large quantity to reduce their inventory. To persuade me to buy in larger volume, they have offered me unprecedented discounted prices. If your church is looking for a projector, this is the golden opportunity to buy one at a bargain price. To be brief I will only list the model, lumens, and special price.

**CP-X345 HIGH RESOLUTION 2000 LUMENS – Only \$1195.00**

Hundreds of our churches bought the older 2000 lumens for \$1900.00.

**CP-X430 HIGH RESOLUTION 2500 LUMENS – Only \$1795.00**

Many of our churches and schools bought this projector for \$2900.00

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**CP-X444 HIGH RESOLUTION 3200 LUMENS – Only \$2195.00**

Several of our churches bought the older model for \$3295.00.

**CP-X1250 HIGH RESOLUTION 4500 LUMENS – Only \$4195.00**

Our larger churches bought this very same model for \$4900.00

These special offers are not listed at my website, because the prices change all the time, depending on the deal that HITACHI gives us. Feel free to call to call us at 269-471-2915 or email us a message at [sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com) and I will email you all the details of each projector. Keep in mind that HITACHI offers us a 3 years 24/7 warranty package that I am told is worth about \$285.00.

**THE SMALLEST AND MOST POWERFUL REMOTE PRESENTER**

If you are looking for an outstanding REMOTE for your PowerPoint presentations, you will be pleased to know HONEYWELL has just come out with the smallest and most powerful remote in the market. You can view it at <http://www.powerremote.com/>

The size of the transmitter is smaller than a credit card. You can stick it inside the palm of your hand and nobody can see it. I tested the remote in an open environment, and the radio signal can go up to 400 feet of distance. IT IS INCREDIBLE! The transmitter has three buttons: forward, backward, and laser.

I can offer this incredible remote for only \$120.00, postage paid. To order a remote, call us at (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915 or email us your order at [sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com)

**DOES YOUR CHURCH OR SCHOOL NEED A SCREEN?**

If your church/school is looking for a screen, the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY, the largest manufacturer of screens in the world, has agreed to offer their line of screens to our Adventist churches and schools at a about 30% discount. The procedure is very simple. Visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at <http://www.da-lite.com>. You

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will see hundreds of models of screens with their respective prices. Once you find the screen that you need, give us the model number by phone (269)471-2915 or email your request <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> We will forward your order immediately to DA-LITE that will ship the screen directly to your address. You will receive the screen at about 30% discount.

### **SPECIAL OFFER ON ALL MY DVD/CD-ROM RECORDINGS**

At this time we are offering the complete FOUR ALBUMS package of all my recordings for only \$100.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$400.00. Here is a brief description of each album.

The FIRST ALBUM contains FIVE DVD DISKS with 10 live PowerPoint lectures of my SABBATH/ADVENT seminars. They were taped few months ago by a TV crew at Andrews University. In these lectures I share the discoveries I made at Vatican libraries in Rome on the change of the Sabbath. These are the popular lectures which I present every weekend in different parts of the world and now you can enjoy them in your home and share them with your friends.

The SECOND ALBUM consists of two CD-ROM disks. The first disk contains all my 17 books and over 200 articles, for a total of over 7000 pages of research that I have produced during the past 30 years of biblical investigation. With the Global Acrobat search engine you can find immediately what I have written on any given text or topic. The second disk contains all my popular PowerPoint seminars presentations. Each lecture consists of about 100 PowerPoint slides, for a total of 2000 slides. The text explaining each slide is provided separately and can be printed when needed. This makes it possible for any person to use and modify my lectures.

The THIRD ALBUM consists of two MP3-AUDIO DISKS that can be played on computers with CD drives, DVD players, MP3 players, newer CD players, and iPod. The disks contain 22 popular lectures on Marriage, Music, Temperance, Dress, Sabbath, Second Advent, and others. You can listen to them while driving or working.

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The **FOURTH ALBUM** consists of one DVD disk with the two hours interview done on 3ABN on my latest book **THE PASSION OF CHRIST IN SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY**. In the interview I show that Gibson's movie on **THE PASSION** is a strict Catholic film that in a subtle and deceptive way promotes fundamental Catholic heresies. More important still, this recording will help you appreciate more fully the Passion of Christ as His passionate love to redeem us from the penalty (Gal 3:13) and the power of sin (Titus 2:14) through His sacrificial death.

The special offer for **ALL THE FOUR ALBUMS** is **ONLY \$100.00**, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$400.00. You can order this package in three ways:

**EMAIL:** The First Way to order is via email. Just email us your home address and your credit card number, with the expiration date. Our email address is: [sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com](mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com). We will process the credit card and mail you immediately the package of the four albums.

**PHONE:** The Second Way to order is by phone. Simply call us directly at Biblical Perspectives. Our two phone numbers are (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915. We will be glad to take your order by phone and process it immediately. Please call us between 8:00 a. m. and 10:00 p. m. EST, not in the middle of the night.

**REGULAR MAIL:** The Third Way to order is by mail. Simply mail your personal check to: **BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES**, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

## **THE BEST SDA COMMENTARY ON REVELATION**

Much of the prophetic message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church derives from the Book of Revelation. Yet until now our church did not have an authoritative commentary. Finally, Andrews University Press has published a thorough Commentary on the Book of Revelation, authored by an outstanding Adventist scholar. This new commentary provides a wealth of information needed to unlock the meaning of the prophetic message of Revelation for our times.

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Read the full story at my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/RevelationofJesusChrist.htm>. If you have a problem ordering the book through my website, just email us your order or call us at (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915. We will be glad to take your order and mail you the book immediately.

## **“Is the Catholic Church Poised to Lead the World?”**

**By Marcus Sheffield, Ph.D.**

### **Introduction**

For many decades now it might have been said that Seventh-day Adventists were living before their time. They preached a prophetic scenario that seemed laughably improbable. It was simply impossible to believe that Roman Catholicism was going to have a profound influence on American social and political life. It was equally ludicrous to believe that the United States was going to play a supporting role in bringing about that influence. As late as 1960, a candidate for president had to declare that he would not be taking his orders from the pope. We are now coming to a time when it will be surprising if he is not.

The very public death of Pope John Paul II changed everything. Without comment in the mainstream press and without a hint of shock or surprise, American presidents, both current and former, knelt before the body of a Roman pontiff in what appeared to be near adoration. Since that moment, only months ago, other surprising events have been occurring at a rapid pace. The question for Seventh-day Adventists now might be, Can the church catch up with the events that are unfolding before their eyes?

Pilots of complex passenger aircraft are said to “fall behind the airplane” when they have not performed the necessary preparation for, say, landing. Landing a Boeing 747 is not a mere matter of pointing the plane toward the ground. A landing begins long before the airport is in sight. Likewise, the God of heaven and earth, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is bringing about the end of all things. He knew long ago of the events we are witnessing, and being the loving Father that he is, he has prepared for this time. The history of the world as we know it, the ways things have always happened, is about to end. Seventh-day Adventists are coming into

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the moment of their existential meaning. All the training and preparation that is going to occur has occurred. What we are about to experience is not a drill. Target practice is over.

Does this all sound a little too dramatic? A little too excited? No, it is not. Here's why.

### **The Protestant Reformation is Over**

First of all, for most Protestants in America today, the Reformation is over. That in itself is significant. When the formal Reformation began in 1517 with the nailing of Luther's 95 theses to the church door, the Roman Catholic Church entered an intense period of confusion and reaction that culminated in the Council of Trent in 1563. The Council of Trent was the carefully considered response to the Protestant threat. Its aim was the destruction of heresy and the restoration of church discipline and order. The goal of the Council has been achieved. Protestants have been completely unmanned. The only resistance left to the hegemony of Catholicism is to be found in small pockets of Bible-believing Christians.

Today we hear the most astounding statements from "evangelical" leaders in praise of what is, in essence, Roman dogma. In tribute to John Paul II, these spokesmen for what was at one time "reformed" Christianity praised the pontiff as a lonely voice of morality in the wilderness of relativity and disbelief. The battle for truth has been abandoned to Rome. What appears certain is that powerful forces in the media, the religious world, and in politics are preparing the people of the United States for acceptance of a new moral vision. This moral vision is a subtle blend of Protestant language and Roman dogma and mysticism.

### **The Real American Religious Tradition**

An example of the nature of this blending would be helpful. On April 11, 2005 Bill O'Reilly of Fox News, a highly influential conservative television personality, observed that the sight of the impressive funeral of John Paul II should make Americans think about getting back to the traditions of their Judeo-Christian heritage. As good as getting back to the American religious heritage sounds, however, the problem is the defini-

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tion of “tradition.” The early American Puritans came seeking freedom to practice their own reformed faith, but they brought with them no concept of freedom of conscience. They used the power of the state to enforce their interpretations of the Bible, and people were punished for all sorts of sins. A famous dissenter among them, Roger Williams, was expelled for his heretical belief that conscience was key to authentic religious faith. He even started his own colony, Rhode Island, which offered a radical form of freedom of religion.

Williams wasn’t being a secularized “liberal” when he did this. He firmly believed that religious freedom would create a purer church, which he understood to be, in reality, a spiritual kingdom. He argued that no civil authority could enforce the first four of the ten commandments, those having to do with the worship of God, and that to enforce them only led to what he termed the “bloody tenet” of persecution for conscience’ sake. Williams felt strongly that freedom of conscience was the key to the whole notion of a pure church. He thought about it so hard that he thought himself right out of one kind of Puritanism and into another. Adherents to this second sort of Puritanism believed in toleration. It was revised Puritanism, not Roman Catholicism, that created religious toleration.

Williams’ idea was very influential in helping Americans develop the system that is the American way. The middle ages in Europe was not a bright spot in the history of freedom of thought. Portions of that time were very dark indeed. The church of the time attacked and killed any who dared disagree with her precepts, canons, and traditions. So Mr. O’Reilly’s point confuses rather than enlightens, which is precisely the object. He places Roman Catholics and Protestants in a package, as if there were no real distinctions. This is politically correct in the current climate, and brings to mind happy thoughts of Catholic priests and Protestants ministers in perfect communion, all with the same basic message. In reality no such package exists, or does it?

Historically, Protestants have said that tradition alone isn’t good enough as a ground of faith. They base this on the words of the Bible. For instance, when talking with some of the Jewish leaders of his time, Jesus said, “Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men” (Mark 7:7, 8). The idea of “tradition” has always

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been a point of great disagreement between Protestants and Catholics. In fact, in Protestant teaching, the pope has been the “antichrist” because he represents the “traditions of men” rather than the “commandments of God” as found in the Bible. Mr. O’Reilly seems to be saying that the disagreement has been solved. And Protestant leaders are going out of their way to distance themselves from the “antichrist” doctrine. John Paul II may have been a nice man personally, full of wisdom, good works, and charity, but what elements of his Roman tradition have changed? The Roman Church still teaches what it always has, and, in fact, still claims infallibility.

Mr. O’Reilly, from all appearances, seems to be one voice among many powerful religious, political, and media voices in our nation that are poised to push this newly achieved “unity” or “blended traditions” onto the American people. Unlike Roger Williams, these forces don’t appear to want “pure” churches; they just want unity for some political purpose. Whatever this new package called “unity” will become, it won’t be “getting back to American religious traditions.” We celebrate the actual beginning of the American tradition every Thanksgiving. In 1630, when a little ship of seekers of religious purity sailed across the Atlantic ocean, their pastor, John Winthrop, preached a great sermon on the open ocean. It was an important sermon because it outlined the hopes and spiritual aspirations of the reform movement that was American Puritanism. That sermon contains the fine little phrase “City Upon a Hill.”

Since that time the phrase “City Upon a Hill” has wandered through countless political speeches and other attempts to define who we Americans are. To the first Puritans it meant something very particular. They were dedicated to the proposition that a reformed, millennial society was possible on this earth, and they were determined to create it. In the wilderness of America they tried very hard to accomplish their goal. But one big obstacle to a reformed society was the little problem of the human conscience. The idea that a person might have the ability to say “no” when everyone else was saying “yes” struck them as dangerous to the common welfare. And the idea that this ability was a God-given right, or even a responsibility — well, that was downright heretical. Of course, not many other people in Europe had thought about it either for, say, a thousand years or so, which is why the Puritans decided to leave that particular part of the world.

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The first “city upon a hill” was Reformed Christianity and later simply the American system as we now know it—freedom of conscience, expression, and religious preference. But powerful forces are fast persuading the American people that the “city upon a hill” is something completely different. History has been lost. Ignorance is gaining the vantage ground. In place of tolerance is coming intolerance. In place of the Bible is coming tradition. In place of freedom is coming slavery. This development will have monumental consequences for the people of the United States. The goal of the Roman Catholic Church is to create the illusion in the United States that Catholicism is in agreement with “Americanism.” In reality, they are as different as light and dark.

### **The New Fusion**

A new syncretism, or fusion, of religious beliefs is being born before our very eyes, a syncretism unified in the name of “Jesus.” An interesting article, entitled “It’s All about Jesus,” recently appeared in the on-line edition of Christianity Today. CT is the voice of evangelical Christianity in the United States. The article well illustrates current developments in the modern spirit of syncretism. The author, Sam Torode, describes his spiritual journey from a fundamentalist Baptist faith to Eastern Orthodoxy. He lists the beliefs of Protestantism that he no longer subscribes to, among them, salvation by faith alone, the dependence of the Christian on the Bible alone, and the necessity of a personal relationship with Christ. In place of these tenets he substitutes salvation by faith and works, the Bible and tradition, and the importance of a corporate identity for the Christian.

When Mr. Torode first left fundamentalism, he fired off hot letters to his friends, vigorously arguing for the falseness of Protestantism and their “cheap grace.” When he joined the Orthodox faith, he experienced the discipline of a more ancient tradition, a tradition that demands things of its adherents—fasting, abstinence, and penance, for example. That experience, though providing an authority and solidity that many Christians yearn for, was not altogether satisfying for Mr. Torode. His life began seeming a bit legalistic, and he and his wife sought a less rigorous form of Orthodoxy, which they found in a new Greek Orthodox church home. He began enjoying a more “liberal” form of Orthodoxy.

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Mr. Torode's theology, his liberal Orthodoxy, now falls somewhere between Baptist fundamentalism and Roman Catholicism. He appears to be a symbolic Baptist and a symbolic Roman Catholic. That is a wide range of symbolism. He now sees the Bible as the important standard of truth and prefers treating tradition, not as separate from the Bible, but as a kind of sacred commentary on the Bible. He realizes that he cannot hand his free will over "to a pope, priest, or spiritual father, even though these can be helpful guides." He admits admiring Pope John Paul II, not because he was infallible, but to the extent that John Paul spoke the truth, "on marriage and sexuality," for instance. Mr. Torode says that it's not the church one belongs to that is important, but the fact that "we all agree that everyone under the lordship of Christ, regardless of denominational affiliation, is somehow part of the church."

Mr. Torode ends his article with an appeal to a kind of "not enough" system of belief. It is not enough to have a liturgy, not enough to be Catholic or Orthodox. "Only Jesus is enough," he writes. He acknowledges the virtue of the "trappings of Orthodoxy — icons, liturgies, rote prayers." However, he admits, these trappings can become idols. When this happens, the Christian needs to "step back and remember what, or who, it's all about."

Rather than engender confidence, however, Mr. Torode's faith seems to be without propositional foundation, and thus, liable to error. In other words, he doesn't seem to have specific Biblical reasons for what he believes because he believes in the Bible, almost. He feels that the name of Jesus alone is a sufficient mark for the proper identification of the Son of God, and thus, the true Christian.

However, "Jesus" is as much a doctrine as theories of justification and sanctification; that is, there are identifiable qualities of the Biblical Jesus that determine who he actually is. Simply claiming Jesus as Lord is not enough because the question always arises, Which Jesus? Is Jesus of the Roman Eucharist the real Jesus? Is Jesus the son of the Virgin Mary who intercedes for us in heaven the real Jesus? And most importantly for the coming crisis, Is Jesus the Lord of Sunday? Only the Bible supplies answers to these questions.

Speaking to the rich young man, Jesus said, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God" (Mark 10:18). Many people call

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Jesus a good man, but is that completely accurate? Is that all he is? In the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus' home town, Jesus explained from the Scripture who he was. The people of Nazareth knew Jesus, they knew "about" him, but thought he was merely the son of Joseph, not the Son of God, the Messiah (Luke 4:16-30). Even the devils knew better (Luke 4:41). When Jesus explained to people that he was the bread of life upon which they must feed, they rejected that Jesus. Peter and the other disciples, who heard this claim, said "we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 7:69, emphasis supplied). There is only one Jesus who is the Savior of the world. And this same Jesus of the Bible solemnly warned, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:4, 5).

### **The Death of Brother Roger**

The recent murder of Roger Schutz in France illustrates further the crisis the world is approaching. A deranged woman is alleged to have stabbed Schutz to death during a worship service. Schutz was a Protestant who, in 1940, founded a religious community called Taizé in Burgundy, France. This community is composed of both Protestants and Catholics who have come together to demonstrate the spirit of reconciliation, love, and ecumenism. The brothers of this community are celibate and have created a highly meditative and impressive form of worship that has been highly influential around the world.

A highly eclectic group of religious leaders have visited and studied what is essentially a Protestant/Catholic monastery. Anglican and Orthodox archbishops, Lutheran pastors, and many other clergy have witnessed for themselves the life of these monks. According to a report by BBC News, "Taizé is . . . deeply committed to religious unity, and although its founders were all Protestants, it drew on various Christian traditions. Pope John XXIII called it 'That little springtime,' and Catholic churches have widely adopted the Taizé approach." Expressions of sadness are pouring in from around the world. The French Interior Minister said, "He was a man of peace. He had managed to establish a spiritual dialogue between the Catholic Church and other churches. We won't forget his message." French President Jacques Chirac observed that "All his life, this man of faith had a message of peace and dialogue."

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Brother Roger and his community are well known by Pope Benedict XVI. At his installation mass last April, the pontiff served the Eucharist to him. This is a highly unusual step for the Roman Catholic Church to do such a thing. It is strictly against Church policy to offer communion to those who are not Catholics in good standing. In fact, according to a canon of the Council of Trent, faith alone is not enough to enable a person to receive the Eucharist, and anyone who says it is, the Council said “let him be anathema.” Sacramental confession is necessary before the Eucharist may be received, and anyone who teaches to the contrary, he shall be “excommunicated.” If Brother Roger received communion from the hands of Benedict XVI without the preliminary steps, then the pontiff is in the strange position of being under the curse of his own church.

### **The Nature of Roman Catholicism**

But no one should be surprised. The Church has always claimed the power to determine the content of truth. The Roman Catholic Church, by its own admission, is a collection of law created through precedent and argument over the long centuries of her existence. This is why Rome rejects the Protestant notion of the Bible as the only authority for truth. For the Roman Church, truth is the result of decisions made over time. It is Roman law which is truth, not the Bible which is truth. What we see in Rome today is nothing more than imperial principles of lawmaking applied to religious things. The papacy represents a set of human laws for creating order in spiritual things, but in reality the worldview of the Roman system is not Biblical because it disregards the commandments of God. The Roman system uses Biblical language, figures, and symbols, but is not Biblical. The Roman system is actually a man-centered, not a God-centered, form of human governance based on tradition. This was true for pagan Rome, and it is true for papal Rome.

In a recent issue of *Newsweek* (August 15, 2005), Christopher Dickey notes the deep desire on the part of Pope Benedict XVI to re-Christianize Europe. According to Dickey, Benedict’s biographer, George Weigel, says that the history of Christianity in Europe may be repeated in America. Clearly, the Roman Catholic Church has as its mission the re-establishment of Christianity as the foundation of Western civilization. However, what does this goal mean for America? America is a traditionally Protestant nation, founded upon Republican principles and the critical idea of the

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separation of church and state. Unfortunately, the United States appears unprepared for the attempt by the Roman Church to assert itself as the standard by which Christianity is measured. The United States does not now realize what it is giving up.

### **The Aims of the Roman Catholic Church**

In the current world climate of fear of terrorism, economic worries, famine, environmental catastrophe, and the rumblings of nature gone mad, the Roman Catholic Church is poised to assert itself as the last best answer to the woes of this earth. Her authority will allow her to create a system of religious belief the likes of which the world has never seen and in which most everyone in the world will find some sort of place. Her authority will also allow her the power to compel the conscience and enforce her claims. It will be a system of peace, unity, reconciliation, love, and compassion. But behind it all lurks the dragon, the enemy of mankind. Without the Holy Spirit and the foundation of the Holy Scriptures, what's coming upon the earth will be impossible to resist.

It will not be easy for Seventh-day Adventists to stand for truth in these days. Many Adventists identify with conservative principles of law and order. To resist the coming syncretism, which will wear an extremely appealing face, will make individuals seem out of step with many laudable attempts by good people to end abortion, fight rampant secularism, stop the decline of the family, defeat the growing homosexual agenda, and end the filth and corruption overwhelming society. But in the Spirit and power of Elijah, the Church will stand and deliver her warning message.

[Marcus Sheffield, Ph.D., is Professor of English at Southern Adventist University. He has created a web site called AdventCry: A Defense of the Reformation in the Time of the End at [www.adventcry.org](http://www.adventcry.org). It will be a web ministry featuring short current articles aimed at a non-Adventist audience. You are invited, if you wish, to use this web site as one of many tools in spreading the final message of the soon return of Jesus. Articles on this site may be freely copied and distributed as you see fit. For questions feel free to contact Sheffield at [msheff@southern.edu](mailto:msheff@southern.edu).]