

Evangelicals & Catholics Together:

Analyzing the Creation of a New Unity

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Introduction:

The Statement of a New Ecumenism

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As many students at a Lutheran liberal arts college file into the cafeteria for supper, a small group postpones their dinner time for half an hour to meet in the basement of Christ Chapel to pray for the needs of their classmates and friends. They take a break in their daily routine of work and studies to worship together, pray together, laugh together, and simply to be together. It seems as there is nothing particularly unusual about this scene: Christians have been coming together in this manner for thousands of years. Yet, mixed in among the Lutherans, are a couple of evangelical Protestants and a Catholic. This prayer group is not an anomaly; rather it is representative of what seems to be a growing trend. Across the United States, an increasing number of evangelicals¹ and Catholics are coming together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

This trend is not exactly new. It has been developing for some time now, but it is certainly real as evangelical theologian J.I. Packer (1983) notes in a book review of *The Born Again Catholic*:

If when I was a student you had told me that before old age struck I should be reviewing a popular Roman Catholic book on the new birth which used Campus Crusade material, carried the official nihil obstat and inprimatur, and was already in its fourth printing in three years, I doubt whether I would have believed you. But that is what I am doing now. Again, if at that time you had predicted that one day an Anglican Bishop would tell me how the last Roman Catholic priest to whom he talked quizzed him hard on whether Anglicans really preached the new birth as they should, I would probably have laughed in your face. But this month it happened. Things are not as they were! (p. 92)

¹ The word *evangelical* will not be capitalized in this paper according to convention. Some of the sources which are quoted in this paper will capitalize the word *Evangelical* so as not to suggest an unequal relationship with Roman Catholics. My use of the uncapitalized spelling is not intended to suggest an unequal relationship, but merely to follow convention.

Things certainly are not as they were, and they are continuing to change.

Perhaps the most significant manifestation of the changing relationship between evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics is a document titled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." This document, signed by evangelical and Catholic leaders, signifies, exemplifies and solidifies a real and emerging movement in American religion, politics, and culture -- a new ecumenism. "Evangelicals and Catholics Together", or ECT as it is commonly referred to, boldly marks a change in the relationship between the two groups. While this change may be seen in prayer groups or book reviews, ECT is a formal attempt at recognizing some shared beliefs and values. The story behind the drafting of the statement, as shall be described later in this paper, is a representative portrait of this new ecumenism. Furthermore, ECT is a tangible statement that captures the notion that "things are not as they were" and gives it a concrete structure. It is a structure that has become a lightning rod for criticism as well as commendation. It is for these reasons that I believe ECT and its role in American religion, politics and culture is worthy of a closer examination.

I believe that at this point it would be appropriate to present the reader with the vital statistics of this document which will be the focus of the remaining pages of this paper. "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," was the invention of Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus who, with the help of a number of other participants, drafted the statement. The statement was distributed for comment and signed by another group of evangelical and Catholic leaders. It was finally published on March 29, 1994 and printed in the May 1994 issue of *First Things*, a journal which is edited by Neuhaus. ECT is an unofficial, nonbinding document that only represents the individuals who signed it and not their institutions. ECT defines and affirms grounds for theological and political unity between Catholics and evangelical Protestants. It also admits areas of theological difference. Among the major points of the statement are

affirmations of the Apostle's Creed and the statement "Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ." ECT also addresses the troubled relationship between evangelicals and Catholics in Latin America which has arisen over issues of evangelism. ECT is a significant and thought provoking statement. It is also a statement that leaves many important questions in its wake.

Among the questions are the following: What exactly does ECT say? What factors were responsible for the formulation of ECT? In what ways does ECT differ from traditional ecumenism? How have evangelicals, Catholics and other groups reacted to this statement? What kind of impact will ECT have on the relationship between evangelicals and Catholics in the future?

Before I attempt to answer these questions, it is necessary to conduct a historical survey of evangelical and Catholic relations. The focus of this survey will be on the relationship between evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics in the United States. This survey will be necessarily brief and undoubtedly incomplete, but it will hopefully provide an adequate framework for discussing the ECT document. With this framework securely established, I will begin to discuss the factors that were responsible for the formulation of ECT? I will attempt to show that theological factors as well as political factors contributed to the creation of ECT. After analyzing the trends which brought us to the present situation, I will examine the ECT statement, paying attention to the authors and the process that produced it in addition to the text itself. Next I will discuss the various reactions of important religious leaders to the ECT document. This paper will particularly consider the reactions of evangelical Protestants, but will also include those of Roman Catholics, liberal Protestants. Finally, I will consider what ECT might mean for the future of evangelical and Catholic relations.

Historical Survey of Protestant and Catholic Relations

The purpose of this historical survey is to provide a broad frame of reference from which to examine the recent developments between evangelicals and Catholics. It does not pretend to be a comprehensive look at the history of Protestant and Catholic relations: such an examination is well beyond the scope of this project. I should also note that this is a look at the relationship between Catholics and Protestants in general, as opposed to Catholics and evangelicals in particular, because evangelicalism as a distinct movement within Protestant orthodoxy did not begin until the 1940's. Yet, evangelicalism is closely linked to the generations of orthodox Protestantism which preceded it. Therefore, exploring the historical relationship between orthodox Protestantism and Roman Catholicism will be beneficial to the examination of the changing relationship between evangelicals and Catholics today.

The Reformation

The reformation began quietly at the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg when Martin Luther posted the ninety-five theses. Word of Luther's defiant act spread as did the fame and popularity of this German theologian who had arrived at a new understanding of Augustinian theology. Luther originally desired to bring reform to the church, but his confrontational personality and the radical nature of his ideas created a division between his followers and Rome. The division grew and sparked tremendous, even violent tension between Luther's followers and the church in Rome.

Tension rose on both sides. Luther and his Catholic opponents grew more and more ferocious in their attacks on each other. Luther believed that anyone who placed themselves in the position of Christ was the Antichrist. Since he also believed that the pope

was claiming authority on earth which only belonged to Christ, Luther rashly concluded that the pope was the Antichrist. John Eck, one of Luther's chief opponents wrote, in a letter received by Frederick the wise, that Luther was an archheretic. Luther's tone grew even harsher in a letter to one of Eck's supporters: "Away with you, you senseless, bloodthirsty murderer!" (Luther, 1883. quoted in Kittelson, 1986, p. 142). In, yet, another letter, Luther declared that Eck was a man "whom we can judge and accuse without sinning" (Luther, 1883. quoted in Kittelson, 1986, p.142). Some of Luther's greatest works such as "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," clearly convey Luther's conception of Rome as holding the Church captive by not allowing the laity to fully participate in the sacraments and insisting that Christians must perform good works to earn salvation.

This antagonism was not limited to Luther and his opponents. Timothy George (1994) notes:

In 1534 Abbot Paul published a virulent anti Protestant booklet entitled 'A Punch in the mouth for the Lutheran Lying Wide-Gaping Throats.' Not to be outdone, the Protestant court chaplain, Jerome Rauscher, responded with a treatise of his own, entitled "One Hundred Select, Great, Shameless, Fat, Well-Swilled, Stinking Papistic Lies' (p. 16)

This type of dialogue was not uncommon. In the 1530s, Catholics and Lutherans began to gather their own militia forces. In 1546, the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor agreed to settle the growing religious and political conflict with the use of force. They defeated the Protestant Schmalklad League in 1547 and forced the Protestants to agree to a treaty which favored the Catholic territories (Gritsch, 1994). Through the Peace of Augsburg was signed in 1555, it was an awkward political solution to the religious controversy. Real peace did not come until after the Thirty Years War. The Thirty Years war (1618 -1648) was a result of widespread dissatisfaction with the peace of Augsburg (Gritsch, 1994). During this war, Lutheran and Reformed princes joined together to combat Roman Catholic forces. The Catholic forces nearly defeated the Protestant armies in 1620 and would have attained a quick victory, had not Gustavus Adolphus II of Sweden intervened and saved the

Protestants from total defeat (Gritsch 1994). Much of Europe was involved in the conflict and nearly one third of the population was decimated (Gritsch 1994).

Animosity marked the tone of the relationship between Protestants and Catholics in Europe and the United States for the next few centuries. Admittedly, the hostilities were not always so intense and there were even moments in which a faint hope of reunification glittered. On the whole, however, the historical relationship between Protestants and Catholics has been a bitter one. Thus, it is not surprising that the disharmonic clashes of this relationship continued to echo throughout the United States during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

The United States

In the United States, unlike Europe, Protestantism dominated the landscape. As Protestants began to build a new nation they also strengthened the tradition of anti-Catholicism. They added to the historical religious hostilities another notion: Catholics opposed democratic institutions and hence, the new American government. It was not until the 1960s that this inane idea would finally disappear.

A few examples will illustrate the utter disdain Protestants held for Catholics during the formative years of the United States. Puritan children grew up reading *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, which added Protestants persecuted by Catholics to a long line of heroes of the faith who had endured suffering (Noll 1995). This reflects in a subtle way the almost unanimous feeling that Catholics were instruments of Satan, which persecuted the true church in the same way that the Roman authorities had persecuted her under Nero. A not so subtle example of this anti-Catholic attitude is Judge Paul Dudley's contribution to Harvard College in 1750. He willed money for a series of rotating lectures, the third of which was to be devoted to:

the detecting and convincing and exposing of the Idolatry of the Romish Church, Their Tyranny, Ursurpations, damnable Heresies, fatal Errors, abominable Superstitions, and other crying Wickedness in their High Places, and Finally that the church of Rome is that mystical Babylon, That Man of Sin, That apostate Church spoken of in the New Testament. (Noll, 1995, p. 87)

On a more substantial political level, Massachusetts outlawed priests in the colony during this era (Dolan 1987). Though it is difficult to capture the complete spectrum of feelings which Protestants held toward Catholics at this period of time, these examples were not isolated incidents and they serve to represent attitudes that were held by many people prior to the revolution.

The situation seems to change slightly as the American Revolution brought in a new era of tolerance. Jay P. Dolan (1987) describes what happened:

Throughout the nation, Catholics and Protestants were learning how to live together; mutual respect for one another had improved, they attended services at one another's churches, sometimes out of necessity, more often out of genuine interest and curiosity; Protestants gave money and land for the construction of Catholic churches and sent their children to Catholic schools; Catholics and Protestants were partners in politics and religiously mixed marriages were commonplace. (p. 73)

The most important reasons for the warmer relations between the groups was the small number of Catholics living in Protestant dominated communities and the relative small size of towns during this period (Dolan 1987). Though there were still major theological disagreements between Catholics and Protestants, some Catholics, like Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore, argued for a much more tolerant view of the church, which did not equate the true church solely with the institution of Roman Catholicism and accepted the salvation of some people who were not Roman Catholic (Dolan 1987). This period of cordial relations was not bound to last however.

Tensions between Protestants and Catholics were fueled once again during the century between 1820 and 1920. In the two decades before the Civil War, anti-Catholicism significantly shaped political attitudes in the North and, to a lesser extent, in the South (Noll 1995). The Know-Nothing Party even tried to use anti-Catholic sentiments to fight against

slavery by connecting Catholicism with slavery (Noll 1995). Noll (1995) gives further evidence to this anti-Catholic spirit with a sampling of book titles from the period:

N.L. Rice, *Romanism not Christianity: a Series of Lectures in which Popery and Protestantism are contrasted, showing the incompatibility of the Former with Freedom and Free Institutions* (Cincinnati, 1847); Thomas Bayne, *Popery Subversive of American Institutions* (Pittsburgh 1856). Joseph Smith VanDyk, *Popery the Foe of the Church and the Republic* (Philadelphia 1871); Jeremiah J. Crowley, *Romanism: a Menace to the Nation; Together with my former book, The Parochial School: a Curse to the Church, a Menace to the Nation* (Wheaton 1912). (p. 91)

As the book titles demonstrate, there was a strong belief that Catholics were anti-democratic and opposed to the American way of life. One of the prime example of this belief was Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal*, which was a best seller in 1836 (Welter 1987). Monk sought to point out the evils of the Catholic Church. She concentrated specifically on Catholic resistance to democracy by describing how the priests had complete authority over everyone in the monastery, and how the Mother Superior had total control over her nuns. She argued that this forced submission was contrary to the principles of liberty (Welter 1987).

Though in general the tension between Protestants and Catholics during the century between 1820 and 1920 remained high, the spirit of anti-Catholicism seemed to rise and fall in waves during this period. There was a period of strong anti-Catholicism immediately after the Civil War, followed by lull during the late 1860's and early 1870's, but anti Catholic fervor rose again in the 1890's.

There are two main reasons for the increased tension between Protestants and Catholics after the Republican period (which ended in the 1820s). The first is immigration. Catholics from Ireland, Germany, Italy and Eastern Europe came to American and drastically changed the social structures of the country. Catholics became the largest single denomination and, in some towns, they made up one half or more of the population (Dolan 1987). Protestant hostilities toward Catholics grew as a result of this widespread immigration. The second reason for the increased tensions was a theological one.

According to Dolan (1987), "the definition of the church as a visible institution reached its zenith of popularity during this age of the immigrant church" (p. 75). Obviously this view was no more conducive to warm relations with Protestants than were the Protestant anti-immigrant attitudes.

Though the icy relations between Protestants and Catholics began to thaw in the 20th century, the changes were slow in coming, especially in evangelical and fundamentalist circles. Carl MacIntyre, a Presbyterian fundamentalist, testifies to the fundamentalist perception of Catholics shortly after World War II:

As we enter into the post war world, without any doubt the greatest enemy of freedom and liberty that the world has to face today is the Roman Catholic system. Yes, we have Communism in Russia and all that is involved there, but if one had to choose between the two...one would be much better off in a communistic society than in a Roman Catholic Fascist set up...America has to face the Roman Catholic terror. The sooner the Christian people of America wake up to the danger the safer will be our land (Morris, 1973, p. 199 quoted in Noll 1995, p. 83).

Wilhelm Pauck (1968) wrote, "the difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism is so profound that it seems almost impossible to recognize them as two forms of one Christianity" (p. 231 quoted in Noll, 1995, p. 83). Other examples abound: Barbara Welter demonstrates that Paul Blanchard echoes the themes of Maria Monk even though he published his book, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, over a century later (Welter 1987). One of the most important books by an evangelical concerning Catholicism was Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism*. After a long and elaborate investigation into Roman Catholicism, Boettner concludes that it is a false church. He writes:

That the Roman Catholic Church has within it much of truth is not to be denied. It teaches the inspiration of Scriptures, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the miracles, the resurrection of the body, a future judgment, heaven and hell, and many other scriptural truths. In every instance, however, it nullifies these truths to a considerable extent by adding to or subtracting from what the Bible teaches The Roman church thus has serious inherent defects that over the broad course of history it cannot possibly prove successful. Clearly it has lost its power to evangelize the world, and instead has become confirmed in its present course that it cannot be reformed either from within or without. In the main it is as antagonistic and as much of an obstacle to

evangelical Christianity as are the Pagan religions Its interpretation of scriptures is so erroneous and its principles are so persistently unchristian that over the long period of time its influence for good is outweighed by its influence for evil. *It must, therefore, as a system, be judged as a false church.* (Boettner, 1962, p. 455, 459 quoted in Noll, 1995, p. 85)

Certainly there are still very strong anti-Catholic sentiments within evangelical and fundamentalist circles today. One example is the book by John Ankerberg and John Weldon entitled *Protestants and Catholics: Do they now Agree?* published in 1995 which will be discussed below. Ankerberg and Weldon criticize ECT with reasonable arguments, but they simultaneously imply themes similar to those found in Boettner's book.

As we have seen, tremendous tension have existed between Protestants and Catholics since the reformation. Much of this animosity continued into the modern age. Nevertheless, as we shall soon see, there have also been substantial changes in the relationship between Protestants and Catholics in the last century.

Why ECT Happened:

Political and Theological Factors Influencing the Formation of ECT

"Evangelicals and Catholics Together" was released in 1994, but it is a result of conditions which developed over a long period of time. ECT should not be seen as an anomaly in the relationship between evangelicals and Catholics, but as one manifestation of the changing climate between evangelicals and Catholics. As John Armstrong (1994) describes: "The publication of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (April 1994) is the most obvious example of a growing evangelical desire to work more closely with Roman Catholics" (p. 295). There are actually numerous trends which have impacted or are still impacting the relationship between Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants. They can be generally classified as being either political or theological trends. Therefore, this section will explore both political and theological trends and describe their influence on the formation of ECT.

Political Factors

There are many persons who believe that the only unity which Catholics and evangelicals could ever achieve is on a political level. Some people, however, might cringe at the suggestion that political factors contributed significantly to the formation of a new unity between Catholics and evangelicals. Nevertheless, it does seem to be the case that political and cultural changes have significantly opened the door to unity; though it is equally true that political trends alone are not responsible for the new found unity.

The historically political aspect of evangelical - Catholic relations.

As noted earlier, there has always been a significant political aspect to the relationship between Catholics and evangelical Protestants in the United States. The Protestant anti-Catholic bias in the nineteenth century was, in large part, the result of the political dimension of their relationship. Catholics were seen as anti-democratic and politically threatening to the Protestant order and as heretics who distorted the Christian message. However, political factors that once created divisions between Protestants and Catholics, are now contributing to the warming of the relationship between the groups and even to the cooperation demonstrated in ECT. In this section, I will examine the political trends that affected evangelical and Catholic relations. These include the increasing role of Catholic politicians in American politics, anti-Communist and conservative political thought among some Catholics in the 1950s, the election of a Catholic president John F. Kennedy, changes in Catholic socio-economic factors, changes in Catholic political behavior, the emergence of socially concerned evangelicalism within Protestant orthodoxy, and the growing alliance forged between evangelicals and Catholics in the new Christian right. This is not an exhaustive list of political factors which have impacted evangelicals and Catholics, but I believe that these have been the most influential in shaping the relationship, and so are worthy of examination.

Catholic participation in politics

One trend which was responsible for the increasing acceptance of Catholics by Protestants in the United States was the growing number of Catholic politicians who sought office in the first part of the century. James Hennesey S.J. (1990) explains it this way:

The first six decades of the century saw an enormous proliferation in the number of Roman Catholic office holders on all levels of government. Sheer numbers had a certain sociological importance. The extent to which Roman Catholics running for or holding public office or commenting in a significant way on public affairs reflected well informed Catholic theological, political and sociological thought was something else again.
(p. 303)

As Hennesey hinted, the Catholics who were becoming active in politics were not necessarily acting out of well informed theological view points. They were lay Catholics who were entering the political realm for political and economic reasons. The example of a New York governor and presidential candidate Al Smith serves to illustrate the point well:

There were also the thoughtful probings of people like Episcopalian attorney Charles G. Marshall, who wondered in print how a conscientious Roman Catholic could reconcile the American understanding of church-state relations with the view of Pope Leo XII in his 1885 encyclical letter, *Immortale Dei*. Al Smith's spontaneous and plaintive "Will somebody please tell me what in hell an encyclical is?" spoke volumes. (Halsey, 1980, p. 4, quoted in Hennesey, 1990, p. 313)

Al Smith was not the only Catholic who down-played his religion for political reasons. This trend was more of a reflection on the continuing tension between Protestants and Catholics in the twentieth century than it was on the personal faith of the candidates. Hennesey (1990) writes:

Throughout most of our history, at least since Charles Carrol of Carrollton retired from active political life, few Catholic politicians have represented a well informed Catholic point of view, however personally devout they may or may not have been. That is changing, and politicians have emerged who are not only conversant with a contemporary philosophical and theological trends and with Catholic thought, but are unafraid to speak out of their background. (p. 318)

The fact that Catholics were not speaking from an informed Catholic point of view in the 1920's is significant; as is the fact that this has begun to change. Because Catholic politicians failed to advance a distinctly Catholic agenda, they caught the attention of Protestants who expected them to act in such a manner. Politicians like Smith still did not receive much Protestant support because of political differences and the lingering anti-Catholic attitudes; however, the fact that they were not seeking to establish Catholicism as the state religion helped to dispel some of the anti-Catholic myths. As more candidates were elected and played important roles in the political system, their presence helped to break some of the tension between Protestants and Catholics.

Catholic anti-Communist and conservative thought

Another tension breaker was the opposition of important Catholic and Protestant leaders to what they together perceived as the Communist menace. It is often the case that groups which have common enemies forge unusual partnerships. Though McCarthyism should not be seen as a Catholic and Protestant partnership, it did not hurt their relationship to find a common external enemy to oppose. Kenneth Wald notes that Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York from 1939-1967, epitomized the traditional pattern of Catholic politics in the United States. Wald (1992) describes Spellman's political influence:

Intensely anti-Communist, suspicious of civil rights and labor movements, and a strong advocate of government efforts to prohibit public displays of "immorality," Spellman forged strong links between church and leaders of secular conservative movements. Under his influence the Catholic hierarchy enthusiastically endorsed the active involvement of the United States in military conflicts wherever communism was thought to be a threat. (p. 281)

Certainly not all Catholics were so conservative in their political beliefs, but Spellman's vocal opposition to communism combined with Kennedy's strong anti-Communist stand in the years to follow, were the coup des gras for association between Catholicism and anti-democratic attitudes. This change was a long time in coming, but it was an important one for evangelical and Catholic relations .

The influence of the Kennedy election on evangelicals

The election of John F. Kennedy as president in 1960 serves as an important milestone in evangelical and Catholic relations. However, Kennedy's election is probably more of a symbolic marking point than actual one. Catholic voters in the election heavily favored the Catholic candidate while Protestants leaned toward Nixon. These voting patterns can be attributed primarily to party identification (Converse, 1966) Yet, as one researcher discovered evangelicals who attended church regularly were even more likely to vote for Nixon (Gilbert, 1993). Voting behavior, however, is not the most telling aspect to the 1960 election: there is a much more important symbolic dimension. Mark Noll's

eloquent comments on the symbolic importance of the Kennedy election are very insightful.

He writes:

The circumstances of the 1960 campaign added even greater symbolic importance to Kennedy's election. His famous campaign speech before Protestant ministers in Houston seemed to convince them, and many others that a Catholic president would not imperil the nation's integrity. Kennedy's scrupulous record on church state matters, particularly his opposition to government aid to parochial schools silenced many critics who feared that Catholics did not have the proper national priorities. On this issue Billy Graham spoke for others by bestowing the indelicate praise that Kennedy had "turned out to be a Baptist President." Moreover the apotheosis that occurred after Kennedy's assassination left him one of the most popular presidents among the public at large. The "religious issue" in American Politics, though not dead yet had suffered a crushing blow. Even Kennedy's misdeeds have helped to diffuse interreligious antagonisms, for his womanizing and power grabbing were "ecumenical" in resembling the misdeeds of politicians who happened to be Protestant. (Noll, 1995, p. 94)

In some ways, the Kennedy election is only a reflection of more significant changes which were occurring in American Culture since World War II.

Socio-economic changes among Catholics

While Protestant attitudes towards Catholics were changing throughout the first part of the century, Catholics, as a demographic group, were also undergoing a number of changes. Perhaps most significantly, Catholics were improving their socio-economic status. As Catholics and Protestants encountered each other with increasing frequency in colleges, in suburbs, and in the political world, the Protestant belief that Catholics were anti-democratic was further weakened. The social position of Catholics was improving as was the level of education attained by Catholics. Lyman Kellstedt and Mark Noll (1990) point out:

The social democratic profile for Roman Catholics has changed considerably since World War II. One of the clearest indications of that change has to do with levels of education. CPS data from the 1950s shows that only 13 percent of interviewed Catholics had any college experience. This compares with 19 percent of white Protestants and 24 percent of Jews. The percentage of Catholics attending college climbed steadily thereafter, surpassing in the 1960s the proportion of evangelical Protestants who had gone to college, and coming close in the 1980s to the percentage of college-educated among other Protestants. By the mid-1980's, 43 percent of Catholics had college experience compared with 32 percent of the

evangelicals and 45 percent of non-evangelical Protestants, and 71 percent of Jews. These figures indicate the transformation of American Catholicism from a population of lower middle class, poorly educated people to a group almost as well educated as mainline Protestants, the traditional elite group in American society. (p. 360-361)

The level of education a person achieves reflects on their social status, but it also figures into the political picture as well. People who attain a higher level of education are more likely to support conservative issues. (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes, 1960). Thus, there has been a trend for Catholic political attitudes to shift toward the right since World War II.

Change in Catholic political behaviors

Catholics were once considered a major part of the Democratic voting block, but are so no longer. Roman Catholics have voted Democratic in the presidential elections since World War II, but the percentage has been dropped steadily ever since (Kellstedt & Noll 1990). Though most Catholics have not switched Party allegiance (35% of Catholics identified themselves as Republicans in the mid 1980s as compared to 27% in the 1950s) Catholics as a whole are voting more in line with the Republican party (Kellstedt & Noll 1990). Church attendance also plays a role in voting behaviors of Catholics as well. Kellstedt and Noll (1990) record:

For the Catholics it is as important to note internal differences as it is for other groups. Regular attendance at mass (an "associational" loyalty) seems to be connected with a stronger vote for Democratic presidential candidates from 1948 through 1960. From 1964 through 1972, regular mass attendance does not seem to effect the presidential vote. For 1976 and 1980, the Catholic pattern began to resemble the Protestant pattern, where regular church attendance is associated with a higher Republican vote, while in 1984 church attendance made no difference. (p. 362)

This finding is relevant to our examination of the factors which brought about ECT because it shows that there have been major changes in the political voting behavior of church going Catholics since World War II. The Catholics whom one would expect to be the most devout in their religious beliefs have begun to vote for more conservative candidates; thus, their voting behaviors have begun to resemble those of evangelicals. This may reveal a trend in the changing political attitudes of Catholics.

When we speak of Catholic attitudes we must be careful to identify whose attitudes are being discussed. Various political trends have arisen within North American Catholicism in the last half a century. These trends embrace left, right and centrist political ideologies. Just as Cardinal Spellman was supporting the Vietnam War, two Jesuit priests became leaders in the protests against the war (Wald, 1992 and Charles Meconis, 1979). Today Catholics find themselves on both sides of the abortion issue, economic issues and almost every other major political issue of the day. Furthermore, the Catholic church itself has spoken out on what it believes are the most important issues. The United States Catholic Conference published a pamphlet entitled "Political Responsibility: Proclaiming The Gospel Of Life, Protecting The Least Among Us And Pursuing The Common Good", which is the church's statement concerning the 1996 elections. The statement includes both conservative pro-life arguments and more liberal economic justice arguments. All of this points to the fact that there is great diversity of political thought in the Catholic church.

Kellstedt and Noll helped to sort out this confusing relationship between faith and politics in the Catholic church. They write:

Catholics who identify their own religious identities in terms of parish life are more predictably Democrats than those who describe their religious identities in terms of beliefs. In addition it seems to make considerable difference if religious beliefs focus on individual values or on communal values, with the former more associated with "conservative" political positions and the latter with "liberal." (Kellstedt & Noll, 1990, p. 363)

While political changes have been important factors leading up to the formation of ECT, many of the recent changes have been tied to religious and theological factors. As we noted earlier, Catholics who attend church regularly and those who describe their religious identity in terms of beliefs and focus on individual religious values tend to be more conservative. In short, Catholics who practice and describe their faith like evangelicals vote more like evangelicals too. In fact, that is exactly what David Leege and Michael Welch found in their research.

Leege and Welch observed that patterns of evangelical devotional style are linked to many conservative sociopolitical attitudes. Catholics, who score high on Leege and

Welch's scale measuring evangelical devotional style, take conservative stands on issues relating to school prayer, gender equality, sexuality and familial roles but they have more liberal attitudes on disarmament and capital punishment (Welch & Leege, 1986). Leege and Welch (1986) also note that an evangelical devotional style is not only a good predictor of political attitudes, but that there is a correlation between theological beliefs and the evangelical devotional style as well. They note that people who score high on their evangelical devotional scale tend to view God in relatively personal terms and as having an active and immediate presence in their lives. (Welch & Leege 1991). These Catholics also exhibit a clear sense of moral norms and eschew morally relativistic stances such as situation ethics. (Welch & Leege 1991).

These trends indicate that there are factors in culture that build unity among religious groups that extend beyond traditional denominational boundaries. There has been a redrawing of boundary lines within contemporary American culture. The new lines are not as strongly economic as they were during the previous decades of this century, instead they are moral and political. Furthermore, just as political and theological divisions have divided evangelical and liberal Protestants, major political and theological issues are dividing conservative Catholics from their liberal Catholic counterparts. Though these internal divisions are not alone sufficient to forge a theological union between evangelicals and Catholics, at least on the conservative end of the spectrum, they do seem to be emerging as the foundations for some type of moral or cultural alliance.

The emergence of evangelicalism as a social and political force

The political trends which have helped to forge the alliance between evangelicals and Catholics have not been limited to changes involving the Catholics. Evangelicalism itself has been one of the most important factors in the alliance. What is recognized as evangelicalism in this paper did not emerge in its present form until the 1940's. Defining exactly what evangelicalism is tends to be a very difficult and complicated process. For my

purposes, it is a form of orthodox Protestant Christianity that emerged as a critique of fundamentalism. It is closely related to the generations of Christian orthodox Protestantism which preceded it. In addition to the conservative theological element of evangelicalism, which stresses Biblical inerrancy, personal conversion and evangelism, there is also a political element. Unlike fundamentalism, one of the basic tenants of evangelicalism is participation in culture. Where fundamentalism tends to seek sanctuary from the corrupting elements of the political world, evangelicalism is concerned with the outside world and actively attempts to influence it. Noting the political significance that evangelicalism has had in the past quarter of a century, Dean Curry (1989) notes:

One of the most significant religious and sociological phenomena of the past twenty-five years is the emergence of theologically conservative Christians as a cultural force in America. For over half a century, theologically conservative Christians -- fundamentalists and evangelicals -- lived in self imposed exile on the periphery of public life. During this time these conservative Christians wandered in a wilderness of cultural irrelevance, believing that this was the price to be paid for protecting the fundamentals of faith against the onslaught of theological as well as secular modernism. (p.43 quoted in Nash, 1994, p.190)

Curry contends that both evangelicalism and fundamentalism lived in self imposed exile for a period. He is correct in that evangelicalism was not active in the sense of the New Christian Right during its formative years, but the roots of a socially active religion were always present as evidenced in the formation and content of *Christianity Today*.

As major cultural shifts became apparent in the 1960s and early 1970s, evangelicals became more active in politics. *Roe v. Wade* and some major turning points in the sexual revolution occurred during this period. Furthermore, prayer was removed from the public school only a few years before in the *Engle v. Vitale* decision of 1963. Evangelicals took a politically defensive stand against these cultural changes (Nash 1994). They began massive campaigns to bring traditional morality and values back into American culture. The most obvious examples of the movements were the Moral Majority campaign against pornography and the pro-life movement.

The timing of the major cultural shifts, the emergence of evangelicalism as a political force, and the aforementioned changes in Catholic religious and political behavior are perhaps the factors which contributed most to the union between evangelicals and Catholics. All of these forces led to evangelicals and Catholics finding each other in the same trenches fighting the culture wars together. As Colson (1995) explains:

Increasing numbers of evangelicals and Catholics are discovering that today's much-discussed "culture war" is much more than a series of battles over issues. Instead, it is a clash of worldviews that involves fundamental differences about truth and ultimate reality, the nature of God, the created order, the moral law, and the human condition. And in this clash these two communities stand shoulder to shoulder. (p. 3)

Growing alliances in the New Christian Right

The reason that evangelicals and Catholics are able to reach agreements like those in ECT is not merely because they have discovered that they are on the same side of many political issues. The real reason is that evangelicals and Catholics have been able to form strong alliances within the cultural struggles. These alliances have taken shape in what has been labeled the New Christian Right. The New Christian Right consists of a few large umbrella organizations and millions of politically aware and active conservative Christians. The organizations which are most often associated with the Christian Right are primarily evangelical organizations. They have been founded by evangelicals and run by evangelicals, but their membership frequently includes Catholics.

Two such organizations are Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition. Moral Majority was founded in 1979 by Rev. Jerry Falwell. It campaigned for a number of conservative issues, including overturning *Roe v. Wade*, increased restriction on the sale of pornography, and voluntary prayer and Bible reading in the public schools. William Bentley Ball observes that one third of the members of Moral Majority were Catholic (Ball, 1989). Moral Majority folded after taking much of the criticism directed at the religious right by the media. In its place rose the Christian Coalition. The Christian Coalition was

formed by Pat Robertson in 1992 and it is headed by Ralph Reed. Reed (1994) writes the following about the Catholic and evangelical coalition:

The future of American Politics lies in the growing strength of evangelicals and their Catholic allies. If these core constituencies -- evangelicals comprising the swing vote in the South, Catholics holding sway in the North -- can cooperate on issues and support like minded candidates, they can determine the outcome of almost any election in the nation. Nasty nativism, and dark distrust about Popery have been swept into the ash heap of history. John F. Kennedy's election in 1960 buried the Catholic bogeyman forever. No longer burdened by the past, Roman Catholics, evangelicals, Greek Orthodox and many religious conservatives from mainline denominations are forging a new alliance that promises to be the most powerful and important of the modern political era. (p. 16)

Reed has effectively sought to bring Catholics into the Christian Coalition alliance. He has worked eagerly with Catholics who embrace his agenda.

Another organization which is often overlooked in discussions of the Christian right is the Catholic Defense League. The Catholic Defense League occasionally works with evangelical organizations like Reed's Christian Coalition to achieve mutual political objectives. In a recent school board election in St. Paul conservative Christian candidates have noted the effectiveness of the Catholic Defense League in stirring up support in their campaigns (Gilbert, Gustafson, Johnson & Mueller 1996).

Theological Factors

One of the primary criticisms leveled against ECT is that it is only a political statement. Some political and theological liberals even see it as a shaky theological agreement which is being used to advance the agenda of the Christian Right. From the other side, theological conservatives argue that ECT is only a political alliance because there are no grounds for theological unity. From these perspectives, one would conclude that ECT has only a slim inclination toward spiritual unity, and that even this vapor of theological collaboration was the result of political trends which brought evangelicals and Catholics together. Yet this analysis is incomplete no matter which side offers it. There are

clearly theological trends that have been influential in the recent cooperation between Catholics and evangelicals. The reason they find themselves side by side in the trenches of the culture war is because they share common theologically influenced moral beliefs. Furthermore, they share an amazing number of theological beliefs from which they can begin to find theological unity. These are real and serious factors that have contributed to the formation of ECT. The political trends may have helped evangelicals and Catholics move beyond the traditional hostilities that divided them, but political trends alone cannot create the theological groundwork for unity. The groundwork must have already been laid for the two sides to even consider their political compatibility. In reality, there is a degree of theological agreement inherited from the reformation era, such as the traditional Christological and Trinitarian confessions. In addition, some areas of agreement have been rediscovered after having been buried by centuries of miscommunication and misunderstanding. Finally, a few important areas of theological agreement have been reached as a result of a multiple religious trends and theological dialogues.

Common Ground

While the common theological ground which Catholics and evangelicals share cannot be labeled as a trend, it is without doubt a factor in the formation of the ECT statement. Without the similar theological stances of the two communities of faith there would be little if any substantive dialogue at all. J Daryl Charles (1994) lists the most important points of evangelical and Catholic agreement:

- a creator who has disclosed himself
- the Trinity
- worship of the triune God
- Scripture as God's word to us
- humanity as fallen and separated from God
- the deity of Christ
- the lordship of Christ
- atonement and forgiveness of sins
- the new (= spiritual) birth
- the resurrection
- the realities of Heaven and Hell
- future judgment

- the witness of God through a people, his church
- the importance of the apostolic witness and early creeds
- biblical morality (p.302)

Daryl is correct in highlighting these shared beliefs and he is not alone. Theologian and founder of Westminster Seminary, J. Gersham Machen, noted the common theological ground shared between the orthodox Protestants and Catholics. He wrote:

How great is the common heritage that unites the Roman Catholic Church with its maintenance of authority of Scripture and with its acceptance of the great early creeds, to devout Protestants today! We would not need to obscure the difference which divides us from Rome. The gulf is indeed profound. But profound as it is, it seems almost trifling compared to the abyss which stands between us and many ministers in our own church. (Machen, 1924, p. 52)

The authors of ECT found this common heritage important as well. Following the introduction, they began the statement with the affirmation of their shared Christian beliefs. These mutual beliefs cannot be ignored in any assessment of the growing cooperation between evangelicals and Catholics. The basis for this cooperation is strengthened even more when we realize that many of the issues that caused, and still cause, sharp divisions between Protestants and Catholics were simply misunderstandings.

Miscommunication and misunderstanding resolved

The authors of ECT expressed that they wanted to clear away misunderstandings which prevent discussion about the real theological issues. The misunderstandings are not simply the malicious attacks on the character of the other religious body, which we observed in the 19th and early 20th century. In the history of evangelical and Catholic relations, there are genuine misunderstandings of theological language which were the result of miscommunication. Evangelical theologian and reformation scholar, Alister McGrath, explains that there were serious misunderstandings in which the two sides fundamentally agreed but did not understand each other. He lists and describes the most important issues upon which they agreed but did not realize their semblances:

- 1 We cannot take the initiative in beginning the Christian life - it is God who moves first. Original sin prevents our finding our way back to God

unaided by grace. Popular Catholic religion in the later Middle Ages was obsessed with the doctrine of justification by works, however pointing to a radical divergence between what theologians taught and that people believed. Although some evangelicals continue to insist that that Roman Catholic church teaches justification by works, that is not the case.

2 The foundation of the Christian life is the work of Christ and not anything we ourselves can do. Once more, popular Catholic piety tended to lay considerable emphasis upon merit and showed an obsessive interest in the various ways in which this merit could be gained or stored, rather like funds in a bank account.

3 Although Christian life is not begun on the basis of good works, good works are the natural result of and expression of genuine Christian faith.

4 The Christian life takes place at the communal, not just the individual level. By beginning the Christian life, the believer finds himself within a community of faith. (McGrath, 1994, p. 202)

These are substantial areas of agreement. Despite popular opinion, these four issues were resolved years ago and are not stumbling blocks to evangelical and Catholic unity.

Although it is difficult to measure, one could speculate that the majority of evangelicals and Catholics still believe that the major theological factor separating the groups, aside from the personal and political hostilities, is the issue of justification by works.

McGrath gives another example of a misunderstanding which still exists today. The term *justification* continues to cause problems in evangelical and Catholic dialogue. For Protestants:

justification refers to the external pronouncement on the part of God that the sinner is regarded as righteous in his sight (*coram Deo*) thus marking the beginning of the Christian life. For the Roman Catholic, who in this manner, continues the common teaching of the western church, deriving from Augustine -- *justification* means both the *event* by which the Christian life is initiated and the *process* by which the believer is regenerated. In other words, Trent understands by justification, what the Protestant understands by justification *and sanctification (or regeneration) taken together.* (McGrath, 1994, p. 203, Italics original)

There is no reason to fight over terminology if there is agreement about what is being expressed. It is true that there are real theological disagreements between evangelicals and Catholics which need to be addressed, but there are also popular misunderstandings, which if addressed, can reduce a measure of division between the two groups. Communication about what is already agreed upon opens the door to conversation over the real issues with

which theologians are concerned. The possibility for this type of communication was enhanced by a series of major changes in the Catholic Church.

Vatican II

As Mark Noll (1994) writes, "The new situation between Catholics and evangelicals is a subset of a much larger reorientation of Catholic and Protestant relations" (p. 94). This "reorientation" took its largest and most significant steps with the decrees of Vatican II. Michael Howard, Regis Professor of Modern History at Oxford, has called Vatican II the second great revolution of our century (Armstrong 1994). George Weigel (1986) explains that there were really five revolutions that occurred within the Church. These revolutions are: modernity (new research methods accepted), self understanding (being a lay Catholic was now a calling), liturgical (native language mass), a new perspective on the Catholic relationship to other churches and faiths, and religious liberty as a fundamental human right. Of these changes, the most important for evangelical and Catholic relations are first, the new view of other churches and second, the liturgical changes.

As mentioned earlier, Vatican II opened the door for Catholic entrance into ecumenical activity. Whether it is viewed as a positive or negative change by evangelicals, it certainly made it possible for Catholics to explore the possibility of deeper fellowship with evangelicals. Since that time, Catholics have feverishly engaged in ecumenical activity. They have played a much greater role in ecumenical discussions than any of the evangelical denominations have. As a result, the Catholic church has become much more comfortable with the process than the evangelical faith community has. This probably had an effect on the formation of ECT.

The liturgical change is important both theologically and psychologically to the changing relations between Protestants and Catholics. Evangelicals perceive the change first as symbolizing the possibility that the spoken gospel of Christ would be understandable in Catholic churches. It led to optimism among evangelicals that Catholics were hearing the

gospel and being saved. Though this optimism reflects the evangelical stereotype of Catholics, it is also an important change in those same evangelical attitudes. Another way the liturgical change helped to change evangelical attitudes was by removing what was to evangelicals was one of the most different aspects of Catholic worship. Catholics would now speak, pray and praise in English, eliminating one of the largest distinctions.

Evangelical style devotionism

The importance of shared worship styles should not be underestimated. Though scholars are concerned about the compatibility of doctrine between different denominations, lay people who find themselves side by side in the trenches will find a degree of unity in worship style. This is not to say that similar ideas about spirituality or worship should be enough to build theological unity between different groups, but it is a contributing factor in the changing relationship between evangelicals and Catholics. Many Catholics are discovering evangelical styles of devotions as was noted earlier in this section. Some are becoming more active in group Bible studies, or prayer groups, while others are having personal devotions. They are listening to evangelical radio programs such as "Focus on the Family" through which they are participating in the evangelical sub-culture. As a result, Catholics and evangelicals are beginning to share a common language through which to discuss matters of faith. This has a significant impact on evangelical perceptions of Catholics as well as Catholic perceptions of evangelicals. Such language builds a feeling of community that is important for progress in theological discussions. Like a common language, shared experiences also build community.

Charismatic movement

In the Charismatic movement, many Catholics have found that they have shared similar stories with Pentecostal evangelicals. Although the issue of the charismatic manifestations of the spirit is an issue which divides evangelicals, it has helped to bring about better relations between some evangelicals and Catholics. The Charismatic movement

grew extensively in the 1960's as Catholics began to experience physical manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Today 20% of Catholic parishes have some sort of Charismatic activity (Welch & Legee 1991). For some evangelicals this has led to a greater acceptance of Catholics.

Lutheran-Catholic Dialogues

In the minds of some evangelical and Catholics, however, such subjective religious experience cannot in any way contribute to a feeling of unity. Furthermore, this group suggests that unity is not a feeling at all but a matter of doctrine. If there has been no progress in reconciling the doctrines, without compromising the gospel of Christ, then there can be no sense of unity. This is a legitimate objection and one which might be answered in part by the progress made in the U.S. Lutheran - Roman Catholic dialogues. According to Alister McGrath, the dialogues successfully cleared away misunderstandings and then turned their attention to the doctrinal disagreements which divide Lutherans and Catholics. McGrath (1994) observes that "no attempt is made to disguise the fact that real differences remain between the churches on this issues" (p. 207). The participants tackle the difficult issues of the nature of justifying righteousness. The participants in the dialogues concluded that the traditional Protestant understanding of extrinsic, alien righteousness and the traditional catholic understanding of intrinsic righteousness are perhaps complimentary and not contradictory. Yet, they avoid the notion that extrinsic and intrinsic righteousness are the same thing (McGrath 1994). The participants in the U.S. Lutheran - Roman Catholic dialogues write:

Our entire hope of justification and salvation rests in Jesus Christ and on the gospel whereby the good news of God's merciful action in Christ is made known; we do not place our ultimate trust in anything other than God's promise and saving work in Christ. Such as [sic] affirmation is not fully equivalent to the Reformation teaching on justification according to which God accepts sinners as righteous for Christ's sake on the basis of faith alone; but by its intense reliance for salvation should be placed entirely on God, it expresses a central concern of that doctrine. Yet it does not exclude the traditional Catholic position that the grace-wrought

transformation of sinners is a necessary preparation for final salvation.
(Justification by Faith, 1983, §157 p. 298. quoted in McGrath, 1994, p. 217
italics original).

Though this theological breakthrough has made little impact on the daily lives of most evangelicals or Catholics, it is an important breakthrough at the scholarly level. It suggests that there are ways for evangelicals and Catholics to talk about the nature of justifying righteousness.

Clearly both political and theological factors helped bring evangelicals and Catholics to an understanding of one another which allowed some of their leaders to write the statement "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." We can now turn our attention to the statement itself.

ECT: The Statement

As we begin to consider what the statement says it is useful to consider who is saying this and how the statement came about. The statement was in large part the invention of Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, although there were others who participated in the formation of the document as well. Colson and Neuhaus have interesting biographies which explain much about their participation in ECT.

Charles Colson is a prominent evangelical leader who has led a fascinating life, which he recounted in the best-selling book *Born Again*. In the early 1970s, Colson served as an advisor to President Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal. For his part in the scandal he received a 7 month prison sentence. During Watergate, Colson underwent a dramatic conversion to Christianity. His conversion received extensive public attention and ridicule in the editorial pages of the nation's newspapers. As a result of his time in prison, Colson founded Prison Fellowship, an international ministry to prison inmates. He has since become an important evangelical leader. He has co-authored many books including *Kingdoms in Conflict* and *The Body*. He is the host of a daily, radio program called "Break Point" which is aired on many Christian radio stations. In addition, he has regular columns in *Christianity Today* and other Christian periodicals. In 1993, Colson won the Tempelton Prize for Progress in Religion. Though Colson is neither a theologian nor a pastor, he has won the respect of many people in the evangelical community for his commitment to the gospel and the cause of Christ.

Richard John Neuhaus is the leading Catholic voice in ECT. He began his career as a pastor in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In 1984 he published, *The Naked Public Square*, which argues against the secularization of American public life. In 1987, Neuhaus published his book, *The Catholic Moment* which formulated a plan for centering moral authority in the Catholic church. This was followed by his conversion to Catholicism in 1990. One year later he was ordained as a priest in the Catholic church. Neuhaus is well known for the think tank he founded called the Institute for Religion in Public Life. It is a

conservative research and education organization, which publishes the journal *First Things*.

He is respected even by his adversaries in the debate over the place of religion in public life.

Tom Flynn (1994), the senior editor of *Free Inquiry*, writes:

Neuhaus is an able spokesman for American religious conservatism -- a redoubtable opponent for humanists and other progressives. Bridging the worlds of academe, theology and politics much as his own life bridges the long turbulent waters separating the Catholic and Protestant camps, Neuhaus has so-far staged a successful bid for leadership among those opposed to the secularist ideal. (p. 8)

In addition to Neuhaus and Colson there are several others who have played significant roles in the formulation of ECT.

The original group of participants in ECT includes seven Roman Catholics and eight evangelicals. The Catholics participants are: **Fr. Juan Diaz-Vilar, S.J.**, Catholic Hispanic ministries; **Fr. Avery Dulles, S.J.**, Fodham University; **Bishop Francis George, OMI**, Diocese of Yakima (Washington); **Msgr. William Murphy**, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Boston; **Fr. Richard John Neuhaus**, Institute of Religion and Public Life; **Archbishop Francis Stafford**, Archdiocese of Denver, and **Mr. George Weigel** of the Ethics and Public Policy Center. The evangelical participants in ECT are **Charles Colson**, Prison Fellowship; **Dr. Kent Hill**, Eastern Nazarene College; **Richard Land**, Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention; **Larry Lewis**, Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention; **Jesse Miranda**, Assemblies of God; **Brian O'Connell**, World Evangelical Fellowship; **Herbert Schlossberg**; and **Dr. John White** of Geneva College of the National Association of Evangelicals (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). These participants are the individuals who were originally present at the discussions from which ECT emerged. After the document had been written, a number of other leaders signed it. They include: **John Cardinal O'Conner** the Archbishop of New York; **J.I. Packer** a theologian at Regent College (British Columbia); **Dr. Mark Noll**, Wheaton College; **Mary Ann Glendon**, Harvard Law School; **Dr. Richard Mouw** of Fuller Theological Seminary; **Michael Novak**, American Enterprise Institute; **Bill Bright**, Campus Crusade for Christ; and **Rev. Pat Robertson** of Regent University (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). These leaders

come from academia, Mission Boards, churches of various denominations, and other ministries. Each person brings unique perspectives to the issues discussed in ECT.² Given the broad sketch of the people involved, we can turn our attention to the process by which the leaders came to agree on the ideas of ECT.

A foundation for ECT was laid in the mid 1980s when Colson and Neuhaus found themselves arguing together for Christian participation in the public dialogue. In 1984, Neuhaus Published his book *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, which argues that the public square is hostile towards religion. Three years later, Colson published his book *Kingdoms in Conflict* which advanced upon the argument of Neuhaus' book. In the years between these publication, Neuhaus and Colson begin to develop a friendship. The relationship grew when Colson invited Neuhaus and Carl Henry to address a group of Christian leaders at the Demoss House of Prison Fellowship in Virginia (Colson & Neuhaus 1995).

While they continued their work of bringing religion into the public debate, both Neuhaus and Colson began to notice a growing trend. They were increasingly being approached by Protestants and Catholics who were discovering each other as brothers and sisters in Christ predominantly because of their shared experiences in the pro-life movement and the Charismatic renewal (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). Colson had also observed this trend in the ministry of Prison Fellowship (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). Many of the ideas about Protestant and Catholic unity are presented in Colson's book, *The Body*, which was published in 1992.

This discussion of evangelical and Catholic unity was furthered significantly in September of 1992 when Colson and Neuhaus met with a group of leaders to discuss the controversy over relations between the two groups in Latin America (Colson & Neuhaus

² Although there are many ministries represented, it is interesting to note the under representation of women and African American evangelicals among the signers. This is probably more of a reflection on evangelicalism and, to a lesser extent, Catholicism in the United States than it is on ECT as a document. Though further research and analysis of this phenomenon would prove interesting, it is beyond the scope of this paper.

1995). As the group was addressing this question, it became apparent to them that they needed to address the problem of evangelical and Catholic relations in North America first. Colson and Neuhaus (1995) explain that the question which emerged out of these talks was: "How could we speak a useful word to our brothers and sisters elsewhere if we had not, in a more careful and comprehensive, way addressed our relationship with one another here in North America?" (p. xii). The group left the conference wanting exemplify the shared Christian life.

The group at the September meetings became the core participants in ECT. During these discussions they worked through some of the thoughts which they wanted to express. In order to refine these ideas they selected a drafting committee (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). The group appointed Kent Hill and George Weigel, along with Colson and Neuhaus to refine the ideas. Dr. Daryl Charles of Prison Fellowship Ministries served as an advisor to the drafting committee on Reformation theology as did the noted Catholic theologian Father Avery Dulles (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). The committee worked out a draft which was circulated and criticized by the participants in the Fall of 1992. Throughout the writing process, seven drafts were circulated, criticized and revised (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). After the committee met for a final time, and approval was given by the participants, the statement was released in New York on Tuesday, March 29, 1994 (Colson & Neuhaus 1995).

ECT is a statement about unity in Christ and in the Christian mission. The participants begin this document, "We are Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics who have been led through prayer, study and discussion to common convictions about the Christian faith" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xv). This is a statement of resolutions made by Protestants and Catholics about the Christian faith and mission in the context of contemporary society. Though the participants do not claim to speak officially for their organizations, they do intend, as individuals, to speak responsibly from and to their respective communities (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). The participants also recognize that

they have a distinctly North American experience from which they reached the resolutions, but they hope that they can be a model for Christians in other parts of the world who are trying to faithfully live out the Christian life (Colson & Neuhaus 1995).

It is clear that this statement strongly emphasizes the joint role of Catholics and evangelical Protestants in the Christian mission. The participants understand the coming millennium as a significant opportunity to proclaim the gospel. They also agree that this gospel can be advanced in many ways, but that the diverse advancement of the gospel is different than the existing divisions (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). The authors of ECT recognize the inherent connection between the visible unity of Christians and the mission of the church as stated in John 17³ (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). Though they believe that this unity should include other Christians as well, the focus of ECT is to bring about further unity between evangelical Protestants and Catholics. The participants admit that often the relationship between Catholics and evangelicals is marked more by conflict than cooperation, and as a result the gospel message has been hindered; thus, they confess together their sins against the unity of the church (Colson & Neuhaus 1995).

The purpose of this statement is not merely to confess sins against the unity of the church but to repent of them by actively seeking to end conflict between the two groups.

The authors explain this in a powerful statement:

As Evangelicals and Catholics we dare not, by needless and loveless conflict between ourselves give aid and comfort to the enemies of the cause of Christ.

The Love of Christ compels us, and we therefore resolve to avoid such conflict between our communities and, where such conflict exists, to do what we can to reduce and eliminate it. Beyond that we are called and therefore

³ John 17 is Christ's prayer for himself, his disciples, and his future followers. When the participants in ECT speak of unity they are referring to Christ's prayer for the unity of all who will believe in him. John 17:20-23 reads: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory which you gave me that they may become as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them, even as you have loved me." (NIV)

resolve to explore patterns of working and witnessing together in order to advance the one mission of Christ. (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xvii)

ECT should be understood as a document which admits divisions, but simultaneously seeks to resolve conflicts. Yet, the authors stress that they do not want to achieve these goals at the expense of truth. They want to meet these challenges only in the faith which they affirm together (Colson & Neuhaus 1995).

In a section of ECT titled **"We Affirm Together,"** the authors focus on the principles of faith upon which they agree. They begin with an affirmation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and an acknowledgment that salvation is found in Him alone (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). They write "We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ. Living faith is active in love that is nothing less than the love of Christ" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xviii). The participants in ECT also affirm their unity in Christ. They write,

All who accept Christ as Lord and Savior are brothers and sisters in Christ. Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ. We have not chosen one another, just as we have not chosen Christ. He has chosen us and he has chosen us to be together. (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xviii)

The authors of ECT recognize that there is but one church of Christ and that they are called to unity in truth no matter how difficult the process (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995). ECT affirms that "Christians are to teach and live in obedience to the divinely inspired scriptures which are the infallible Word of God" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xviii). They also agree that the Holy Spirit is active in the life of the church today, just as the Spirit guided the church in the past. Finally they affirm together the faith as stated in the Apostle's Creed.

In the section called **"We Hope Together,"** the authors of ECT state their hope that all people will come to salvation in Jesus Christ (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995). They recognize the importance of the great commission and the necessity of unity in trying to fulfill it. They stress the importance of demonstrating Christian love as outlined in John

13⁴. The authors explain, "If we do not love one another, we disobey the gospel we declare" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xix). While they admit that they do not have a specific plan to move toward the more visible unity of which they speak, they do assert that Christ is the way, but that the current tension and conflict is most assuredly not (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995). Though they hold on to this hope of unity and purpose they also admit that they have significant disagreements.

In the section entitled "**We search together**," the participants in ECT recognize that there are many serious disagreements between them. However, they confirm that there are also misunderstandings, misrepresentations and caricatures of one another, which need to be cleared away before the disagreements can be discussed (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). They agree that there are limits to human understanding, which are "compounded by sin", and serve to prevent them all from completely comprehending "the transcendent reality of God" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xx). Therefore they "search together for a fuller and clearer understanding of God's revelation in Christ and his will for his disciples" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xx). In this statement, the authors do not try to resolve the historical disagreements between Protestants and Catholics, and they resign themselves to the possibility that these disagreements may never be resolved before the second coming of Christ. They contend, however, that "not all disagreements are authentic differences, nor need all differences divide" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xxi). Thus they encourage theological dialogue between Roman Catholics and evangelicals.

The participants in ECT identify a list of doctrines upon which they do not agree. While they concede that this is probably not a comprehensive list, they believe that it represents the most significant disagreements.

- The church as an integral part of the Gospel or the church as a communal consequence of the gospel
- the church as a visible communion or an invisible fellowship of true believers

⁴ The participants in ECT are referring to the story of Jesus washing his disciples feet.

- The sole authority of Scripture (*sola scriptura*) or scripture as authoritatively interpreted in the church.
 - The “soul freedom” of the individual Christian or the magistrium (Teaching Authority) of the community.
 - The church as a local congregation or universal communion.
 - Ministry ordered in apostolic succession or the priesthood of all believers.
 - Sacraments and ordinances as symbols of grace or means of grace.
 - The Lord’s supper as an eucharist sacrifice or memorial meal.
 - Remembrance of Mary and the saints or devotion to Mary and the saints.
 - Baptism as a sacrament of regeneration or testimony to regeneration.
- (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xxi)

While their differences are significant, the signers of ECT believe that they are part of a common mission. Part of that mission in their estimation is working to shape contemporary culture.

The authors of ECT hold that Christians individually and the church cooperatively have a responsibility for the right ordering of society. They write, “Our cooperation as citizens is animated by our convergence as Christians” (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xxiii). Thus, they believe that Christian political participation is important for the nation. They write:

With them (the founders) we hold that this constitutional order is composed not just of rules and procedures, but is essentially a moral experiment. With them, we hold that only a virtuous people can be free and just, and that virtue is secured by religion. To propose that securing civil virtue is the purpose of religion is blasphemous. To deny that securing virtue is a benefit of religion is blindness. (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xxiii)

The authors identify a number of specific issues they see as important to the Christian mission in the contemporary culture. The participants want to work together for the free exercise of religion in the United States and around the world. They are also committed to helping people understand one another better. They explain, “We contend for a renewed spirit of acceptance, understanding and cooperation across lines of religion, race, ethnicity, sex, and class” (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xxvi). The statement also addresses the participants’ support for a free society and a market economy. They argue that such a society accords with the Christian understanding of human freedom (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995). Similarly they contend for a renewed appreciation of Western culture (Colson &

Neuhaus, 1995). They argue for a foreign policy that that is neither completely isolationist nor interventionist. They see this policy as one that defends democracy and advances human rights whenever possible (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). They argue that the church has a role to play in responding to a variety of human needs. (Colson & Neuhaus 1995).

The participants in ECT are also committed to protecting unborn children which they consider human life. Their goals in fighting against abortion are "to secure the due process of law for the unborn, to enact the most protective laws and public policies that are politically possible, and to reduce dramatically the incidences of abortion" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xxv). They are also committed to fighting on the pro-life side in debates over euthanasia and population control.

Education is another issue which concerns the participants in ECT. They write:

Education for responsible citizenship is inescapably moral education. Every effort must be made to cultivate a morality of honesty, law observance, caring, chastity, mutual respect between the sexes, and a readiness for marriage, parenthood and the family. We reject the claim that in any of these areas, 'tolerance' requires that the promotion of moral equivalence between normative and deviant." (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xxv)

They argue together for the possibility of parental choice in education (Colson & Neuhaus 1995). They also find themselves on the same side of the battles against pornography and "violence, sexual depravity and antireligious bigotry in the entertainment industry" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xxvi).

Though they are evangelicals and Catholics who find unity in their concerns for the state of society, they oppose the notion that "this constitutes a religious agenda in partisan politics" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xviii). The participants admit that their faith motivates their sense of civic responsibility, but they strongly contend that they do not hold infallible political beliefs, which are beyond the level of public discourse. Despite the level of cooperation which has been found by evangelicals and Catholics in the areas of public life and basic tenants of faith, the authors of ECT believe that the proclamation of the gospel must hold priority over building unity.

In the section entitled **"We witness together,"** The authors address the importance of spreading the gospel and the obstacles to evangelism which have arisen, particularly those in Latin America. They write, "The achievement of good will and cooperation among evangelicals and Catholics must not be at the price of the urgency and clarity of Christian witness to the Gospel" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xviii). Still, the participants in ECT try to reach agreements on some of the most controversial issues of evangelization.

The authors admit that one major problem in evangelical and Catholic relations is the fact that the groups often attempt to steal sheep from the fold of the other. They assert that true evangelism should be aimed at conversion to God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995). The definition of conversion adopted in this statement is taken from the Baptist-Catholic International conversation (1988). In defining conversion they hope to move one step closer to defining what is legitimate evangelism and what is merely proselytizing. They write, "there is a necessary distinction between evangelizing and what is today commonly called proselytizing or 'sheep stealing.' We condemn the practice of recruiting people from another community for purposes of demonialization or institutional aggrandizement" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xxix). The actors in ECT come to three other conclusions about issues of evangelization as well:

First, as much as we might believe one community is more fully in accord with the gospel than another, we as Evangelicals and Catholics affirm that opportunity and means for growth in Christian discipleship are available in our several communities. Second, the decision of the committed Christian with respect to his communal allegiance and participation must be assiduously respected. Third, in view of the large number of Christians in the world and the enormous challenge of our common evangelistic task, it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community to proselytize among active adherents of another Christian community. (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. XXX)

In the conclusion of the statement, the authors address a few remaining resolutions of unity. They agree that bearing false witness against other persons or communities, or making unjust or uncharitable judgments against them, is also not in accordance with the gospel. The participants conclude that as Christians they should strive to be fair and accurate in their representations of other groups. They sum up the document with the

statement of agreement, "We do know that His promise is sure, that we are enlisted for the duration and that we are in this together" (Colson & Neuhaus, 1995, p. xxxii).

Unofficial Ecumenism

"Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" is a unique document. ECT can be called a statement of "unofficial" ecumenism because it represents a new way to encourage unity among believers in Jesus Christ. It has also been dubbed an "ecumenism of the trenches," to distinguish it from the ecumenism of the universities and the church conference rooms (Colson, 1995, p. 2). It emphasizes the agreements of individual believers from different communities of faith, who find themselves working side by side for the cause of Christ. Whatever name it goes by there are a number of characteristics which distinguish this new ecumenism from its traditional predecessor.

ECT does not claim to speak for anyone except the signers themselves; yet, it has had a tremendous impact on religion in America. Typically ecumenism involves churches and denominations coming together to resolve differences through organizations such as the World Council of Churches or the National Council of Churches. Though ECT was signed by evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic leaders, who pledged their support to ending conflict in their communities and working together in the Christian mission these leaders did not have the official backing of their churches or organizations. Despite this fact the signers of ECT have generated a great deal of discussion in some Christian circles as a result of their prominent positions in various ministries. The participants in ECT have, at the very least, created a controversy which has attracted attention to their convictions, and they have quite possibly made a convincing case for their beliefs in the hearts and minds of their communities. Perhaps one of the reasons why ECT has made such an impact is the popular nature of the document.

Part of the function of the ECT document is to communicate its ideas to the average Christian. The authors of ECT accomplished their task through the smooth prose of the document and the extensive publicity which they have given it. The idea which will probably have the widest hearing is the attempt to clarify and heal the relationship between

evangelicals and Catholics. ECT directly challenges the hostility which has plagued relations between evangelicals and Catholics throughout history, and the participants agree to work toward healing these divisions. Yet, ECT's message to Christians runs deeper than the text. There is a publicly communicated symbolic act in ECT that conveys the message that evangelicals and Catholics are working together to promote unity.

While ECT is unique in the way in which it communicates a growing desire for unity between Protestants and Catholics, ECT is not a theologically innovative statement. It avoids the most difficult theological disputes, even though it acknowledges that those disagreements exist. At the same time, ECT emphasizes the theological issues upon which evangelicals and Catholics have historically agreed. It highlights the agreements and acknowledges differences which prevent unity without allowing them to harm a mutual respect, or shatter agreements which have been reached. ECT seeks unity in the church, but it does not seek unity at the expense of doctrinal distinctiveness. Colson explains it this way:

This new ecumenism bears no relationship to liberal ecumenism, which seeks unity by disregarding doctrinal differences. Conservative evangelicals and Catholics understand and maintain the distinctiveness of their respective traditions. All the same, they take the united stand on the common ground of scripture and the ancient confessions - what C. S. Lewis called mere Christianity. (Colson, 1995, p. 2)

Just as ECT does not try to resolve or ignore theological disagreements, it also does not try to reorganize church structures or to organizationally reunite church bodies. The participants in ECT believe that visible unity is not limited to shared organizational structures. Rather than creating new institutions, their intent is to follow the Lund principle, which states that, as ecclesiastically divided Christians they should not to do separately what they can in good conscience do together (Packer, 1995). The unity which they seek is not physical in the sense of wanting to form one common church. Yet, the unity which they seek is no less real.

ECT specifically encourages theological dialogue and an open line of communication between evangelicals and Catholics. Though it is only an unofficial

ecumenical statement, ECT encourages the possibility of further talks between evangelical and Catholic theologians in a more formal manner. It also promotes more, open, non-theological collaboration between lay persons in both communities.

Reactions to ECT

As we have seen, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" has been an important marking point in the history of evangelical and Catholic relations. The question remains, however, as to what ECT will mean for the future of the relationship between evangelicals and Catholics. Though only the passage of time will tell us for certain how significant ECT's influence will be on the future, some indication of its importance can be seen in the responses of key individuals and groups to this document. Thus, we will consider the various responses of evangelicals and Catholics, as well as the reactions of liberal Protestants, and others interested in the alliance of evangelicals and Catholics in today's political framework. These responses should give us some indication of the immediate impact of ECT.

Evangelicals

Evangelicals have expressed their reaction to this statement more than any other group. There are probably a number of factors which account for this. Among those reasons is the fact that evangelicals have not played a large role in the ecumenical movement. Evangelical denominations have exhibited a tendency to divide because of theological differences, and they have found little reason to formally join together aside from their mutual opposition to the National Council of Churches. It is no wonder then that many evangelicals would react passionately to this proposed cooperation with Catholics. Up to this point there has not been extensive discussion about how evangelicals should view the changing relationship with Catholics in the United States. As a result of ECT, that discussion has been initiated. At least four books have been published on the subject since

the ECT discussions began to take shape. Furthermore, the topic has received extensive treatment in the major evangelical journal *Christianity Today*. The unfortunate result is that evangelical discussions about ECT have overpowered conversations in other communities. Michael Cromarite is quoted as saying: "Instead of getting evangelicals and Catholics dialoging across ecumenical boundaries, what you've seen is an intramural evangelical discussion about how we ought to talk to Catholics" (Evangelical - Catholic pact questioned, 1995, p. 278). There are three distinct positions which evangelicals have taken in this intramural discussion. Some evangelicals (and to a greater extent, fundamentalists) have been extremely critical of the statement; others recognize the importance of cooperation with Catholics, but caution against making sweeping theological statements; a final group strongly supports the statement.

I will begin my analysis of the medley of reactions to ECT with those who are the most antagonistic towards the statement. The most fiery opposition to ECT comes from fundamentalist circles, which have a history of criticizing the evangelical establishment of theological liberalism. Frequently, fundamentalists view evangelicals as a greater danger than liberals theologically, because evangelicals claim to represent the heart of orthodox Protestantism. It is also worth noting that fundamentalists have been the staunchest and harshest critics of Roman Catholicism as well. It is not surprising then that the responses of fundamentalist leaders to ECT have been extremely critical but also brief and sparse, perhaps, for the sole reason that fundamentalists have already written off both evangelicals and Catholics as heretical compromises and have severed relations with both groups. One very illustrative example is the response of Bob Jones III the president of Bob Jones University. Jones believes that ECT provides evidence that "the ecumenical church which will be the church of the Antichrist will be rapidly forming" (Frame, 1994, p. 53). Although Jones' words express his complete disapproval of both the participating groups and their actions, his tone can be interpreted as conveying his resignation to the fact that the union between evangelicals and Catholics, however Satanic, was bound to happen. Another

fundamentalist leader's response was similarly bitter. Tex Marrs, the author of numerous books and the editor of the news letter *Flashpoint*, wrote an article about Chuck Colson concerning his theological stands and his acceptance of the Tempelton Prize for progress in religion, which was entitled, "Tex Marrs asks Chuck Colson, Will You Sell Your Soul to the Devil for a Million Dollars?" (Armstrong, 1994, p. 295). Obviously Tex Marrs is hostile to Colson's cooperation with Catholics. Many of the fundamentalist reactions are simply reactions: they do not tread deeply into the theological or political issues of ECT. Moreover, these retorts have not been widely circulated or publicized. To summarize, the fundamentalist responses to ECT are in accord with conventional wisdom of fundamentalist and evangelical relations : that is, they are biting critical, but lacking substance and publicity. However, fundamentalists are not the only ones who have been rejecting of ECT.

The best representation and most developed example of a critical evangelical response to ECT is the book *Protestants and Catholics: Do They Now Agree?* by John Ankerberg and John Weldon. The thrust of this book is that ECT has achieved a false unity by compromising truth. They pose the questions:

What exactly is the one mission that Catholics and evangelicals are to embrace? Can it be truthfully said that we are witnessing together if both parties disagree on the message that is to be proclaimed?

Those who signed this agreement do not answer these questions, though they seem to be aware of the importance of these issues since they state, "We reject any appearance of harmony [or unity] that is purchased at the price of truth."

But aren't statements about Christian unity, witnessing together, and advancing one mission in Christ, when they are made without any biblical basis or explanation, projecting the appearance of harmony at the price of forfeiting truth?

Anyone who compares the gospel of Roman Catholicism with the gospel of Scripture must conclude that there can be no agreement between evangelicals and Catholics. If Catholics now agree to doctrines they formerly rejected, then why didn't this agreement document *that*? (Ankerberg & Weldon, 1995, p. 142, *Italics original*).

Ankerberg and Weldon argue that the evangelical signers are forging a false unity because they have severely compromised the doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*).

Following their introduction, Ankerberg and Weldon use the next four chapters of their

book to deal with the doctrine of justification, which they believe to be the central issue in the discussion between evangelicals and Catholics. Their basic conclusion is that evangelicals and Catholics have different understandings of the nature of justifying righteousness, and thus, the gospels preached by the two groups are truly different. Ankerberg and Weldon (1995) criticize the writers of the document for selecting vague words that demonstrate their commitment to salvation by faith through grace because of Christ, but do not clearly define how the parties reached an agreement on the nature of justifying righteousness. This is a very legitimate and important critique. ECT does use intentionally vague terms to describe the items of agreement, and the authors of ECT do not elaborate on the issues over which they disagree. However, it must also be taken into account that the legitimate arguments which Ankerberg and Weldon make are mixed together with a substantial amount of anti-Catholic bias. For example, Ankerberg and Weldon (1995) assert 2 Timothy 4:3-5⁵ as a possible reason why ECT has been so popular. In this way, they imply that ECT is not only a vague and unclear statement, but also a Satanic doctrine infecting the church with lies and signifying the coming of the end times (p. 157). Ankerberg and Weldon conclude their book with an afterwards directed at Catholics and evangelicals separately. In the chapter titled "A Personal Word to Catholics" they offer the text of a salvation prayer, which they urge Catholic readers to pray in order to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. No such prayer is found in the evangelical section. The implication is obvious: the authors believe that readers who call themselves Catholics are not Christians and will need a salvation prayer, but the self identified evangelical readers are assumed to be Christians. Though no Christian would deny the importance of having Christ as savior and Lord of one's life or the importance of

⁵ Those verses read: "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and aside to myths. But you keep your head in all situations, endure hardships and do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." (NIV).

the proclamation of the gospel, this implication could be interpreted in a very offensive manner.

In spite of the harsh nature of the criticism offered in his book, Ankerberg and some other evangelical leaders who are critical of ECT have met with ECT signers Chuck Colson, Bill Bright and J.I. Packer to achieve a measure of understanding and clarification over the issues of ECT. Ankerberg explains, "during our meeting, God graciously brought us all to an agreement and reconciliation on the definition and nature of the gospel, as well as a full commitment to justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ as central to the gospel" (Ankerberg & Weldon, 1995, p. 4). The meeting, which was held on January 19, 1995, produced a five point doctrinal statement which clarifies what the evangelical signers meant by "justification by faith," and "proselytizing." It also explains that para-church cooperation with Catholics does not mean endorsement of the Roman Catholic church system, that evidence of conversion consists of both one's confession and of signs of regeneration in the individual's life, and emphasizes the desire of the signers to begin theological discussions as soon as possible (Ankerberg, 1995, p. 5). Both ECT signers and critics viewed the meeting as a positive experience. In a letter to ECT supporters, Colson described the meeting, "It is a beautiful example of how Christians should deal with their differences" (Maxwell, 1995, p. 52).

Not all of the critical reactions to ECT have been as intense as those of Ankerberg and Weldon. There have been a number of serious critiques of ECT which question the conclusion of the document without doubting the salvation, commitment or sincerity of its authors. The respectfully critical response to ECT is reflected in editorials by Kenneth Kantzer and Timothy George which appeared in Christianity Today. Kantzer (1994) defends the commitment of the evangelical signers to evangelicalism and admits that, "a document like this should have been prepared and signed by all evangelicals three decades ago" (p. 17). Yet, Kantzer does have a few concerns about the statement. His chief

argument is similar to that of Ankerberg and Weldon, in that Kantzer questions the dismissal of the doctrine of justification by faith. He asserts: "Far more serious, however, is the total ignoring of the doctrine of justification by faith as a distinctive separating evangelicals and all Catholics loyal to the official teaching of the church. Justification by faith is mentioned as though it had not been a matter of serious disagreement (Kantzer, 1994, p. 17). Timothy George (1994) also expresses his mixed reaction to ECT. He suggests:

The fact that evangelicals share more in common with born-again Catholics than with liberal Protestants -- on theological as well as social grounds -- should not blind us to the fact that substantial and persistent differences remain between us. The framers of this document have not dodged the issues, but they must pursue them further on the basis of their commonly confessed Trinitarian and Christological consensus. (p. 17)

One other example of a published reaction to ECT is a book, edited by John Armstrong, entitled *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants Analyze What Divides And Unites Us*. This book takes a step towards fulfilling Timothy George's suggestion of pursuing the uniting and dividing issues further. It is an anthology composed of several essays which offer fair and honest analysis of the growing cooperation between Evangelicals and Catholics.

There are obviously a number of evangelical leaders who support ECT. Many of these leaders were participants in or signers of ECT; though there are others whose names do not appear on the document. These leaders have not publicly expressed their belief in ECT to the extent that ECT's critics have offered their responses, but that is probably to be expected. There are two notable exceptions to this trend. One is the book edited jointly by Chuck Colson and Richard John Neuhaus entitled, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*. This book contains essays by evangelical leaders Chuck Colson, Mark Noll, and J.I. Packer, as well as three Catholic participants in ECT. The other exception is J.I. Packer's solid defense of the document in a feature article for *Christianity Today*. In this article Packer gives concrete reasons for signing the statement and adjusting

the historic Protestant stance toward Catholics. He eloquently puts forth three powerful arguments:

Though Protestant and Catholic church systems stand opposed, and bad -- that is unconverted -- Catholics and Protestants are problems on both sides of the reformation divide, good Protestants and Catholics are, and know themselves to be, united in the one body of Christ, joint heirs not only with him, but with each other.

Vital for the church's welfare today and tomorrow in the United States and Canada is the building of the strongest possible transdenominational coalition of Bible-believing, Christhonoring, Spirit-empowered Christians who will together resist the many forms of disintegrative theology -- relativist, monist, pluralist, liberationist, feminist, or whatever -- that plague both Protestantism and Catholicism at the present time.

It can be argued that, so far from running ahead of God, as some fear, ECT is playing catch up to the Holy Spirit, formulating at the level of principle a commitment into which many have already entered at a level of practice; and certainly, the burden of proof must rest on any who wish to deny that this is so. (Packer, 1994, p. 34-37).

Packer is by no means alone in his support of ECT, but I have noticed that the signers of ECT have done the lion's share of defending it. Colson, in particular, is frequently called upon to respond to critic's questions. This is probably a result of a trend throughout evangelicalism which gives priority to the voice of self appointed leaders and not evidence of a widespread lack of support for the document.

Catholics

Though it would seem easier to gauge the Catholic response to a document such as ECT than the Protestant reaction, because of the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, the opposite is true in this case. It is much easier to measure the reaction of a few prominent evangelical leaders than it is to divulge what the authorities in the Catholic Church believe about this statement. It is simple to note how a few Catholic signers, like Neuhaus, Weigel, or Keith Fournier feel about the statement because they have been quite vocal about their support. Yet, it would be a grave mistake to take their views as representative of all of Catholicism. It would be especially interesting to know what the

Pope thinks about the ECT statement, but there seems to be conflicting evidence on this question. Randy Frame reports Neuhaus as saying that ““appropriate parties at the Holy See gave the effort their ‘strongest encouragement’” (Frame, 1994, p. 53). This would seem to indicate some level of unofficial support from those who hold official positions in the Catholic Church for at least the attempt to build unity, if not for the document itself. Yet, the Pope’s recent comments on a four nation trip to Latin America seem to suggest that the Catholic church’s attitude toward evangelicals has not warmed. Stephen Sywulka (1996) explains that :

The pontiff’s call for reconciliation did not extend to the religious sphere, where he complained that Indians and peasants in particular, are being led away by “sects and new religious groups who sow confusion and uncertainty among Catholics.” Evangelicals throughout Latin America have protested Catholic leaders’ inclusion of historical Protestant denominations with aberrant Pentecostal groups in their use of the term *sects*. (p. 94, Italics original)

It should be noted, however, that the relationship between evangelicals and Catholics in Latin America is an entirely different situation than the relationships between the two groups in the United States. There is intense conflict between evangelicals and Catholics in that area of the world and the pope’s words may not necessarily represent how he feels about cooperation between evangelicals and Catholics in the United States. Still, his comments speak to the fact that ECT has not yet brought about significant changes in the perspective of the Catholic church on the tension in Latin America.

Liberal Christianity

Liberal Christianity, along with secularism, appear to be the primary targets of the theological and political cooperation between Catholics and evangelicals. As a result, one might expect to find intense reactions on the part of liberal Christians to the new document. This is not the case however. Until recently there have only been a few news articles in the leading liberal publication *The Christian Century*. What exactly should be made of this

lack of response is unclear. Perhaps ECT is not a surprising statement for many liberal Christians who pioneered the first breakthroughs in Protestant and Catholic relations via the ecumenical movement.

Conclusions and the Future

As the reader will recall, we began this investigation with a number of questions. What exactly does ECT say? What factors were responsible for the formulation of ECT? Why is ECT so unique? How have evangelicals, Catholics and other groups reacted to this statement? Each of these questions has been addressed.

One question still remains unanswered. What does ECT mean for the future of evangelical and Catholic relations? In truth, it is not exactly clear what kind of impact ECT will have upon the relationship between Catholics and evangelicals. Time may not even provide a definite answer to that question, but perhaps determining the impact of the document on the relationship is not the most important question. My research has shown that there are some very perceptible trends at work shaping the relationship between evangelicals and Catholics. ECT can be seen as a continuation of the trends which were already at work. Thus the real question is: Given the recent historical context of warming relations between evangelicals and Catholics, what does ECT indicate or symbolize for the future of evangelical and Catholic relations? There are a few important indicators to consider in attempting to answer this question. First, the ideas presented in the ECT document itself and the unique process by which it was written need to be taken into account. Second, the reactions of various evangelical and Catholic leaders to the ideas incorporated in ECT are important to our analysis. Finally, it will be necessary to consider the status, of the current debate in Latin America over issues of evangelism. However, before turning to an analysis of the future of evangelical and Catholic relations, I would like to briefly re-summarize those four key indicators: the historical relationship, the text of the statement and the method of cooperation which created it, the reaction of major religious leaders, and the current situation in Latin America.

First, numerous political and theological factors were uncovered which paved the way for a statement of unity between evangelicals and Catholics. Among the political factors discussed were: the increasing role of Catholic politicians; anti communist and

conservative thought among some Catholics in the 1950s; the election of John F. Kennedy; changes in the socio-economic status and voting behaviors among Catholics, the emergence of evangelicalism as a political force and the cooperation between Catholics and evangelicals in the New Christian right. The theological factors include historically shared doctrine, clarified theological misunderstandings, progress in theological discussions, and shared religious experiences.

It was also observed that ECT is a multi-faceted document. It boldly asserts the theological, moral and political positions shared by the Catholics and evangelical authors of the statement. Furthermore, ECT expresses the desire of the participants for unity in Christ. It also acknowledges, but fails to wrestle with the theological disagreements which divide evangelicals and Catholics. Finally, it conveys the hope that evangelical and Catholic Christians in Latin America and around the world will be able to cooperate in the church's mission of evangelization.

This paper also contends that ECT is a new and unique form of ecumenism. It is unique because it favors unity built by individuals, leaders and lay persons, over that built by church bodies. It is also unusual in its accessibility to the lay reader via the clear prose and extensive publicity which it has received. Finally ECT is exceptional because it intentionally avoids attempting to resolve theological disagreements, while simultaneously accentuating both theological and political positions of agreement.

The reactions of various groups and persons to the ECT statement were also observed. The myriad of evangelical reactions was emphasized in particular because of the amount of discussion in evangelical circles. Three evangelical responses were identified: critical, moderately critical, and supportive. The Catholic response to the document was difficult to measure and the allusions about Rome's position are conflicting. It was also noted that there has been little response from theological liberals to the document.

Up to this point I have made only a few passing remarks about the situation in Latin America, so it will be necessary to briefly elaborate on that material in order to draw

conclusions about the future of evangelical and Catholic relations. Tensions between evangelicals and Catholics have been high in Latin America for a number of years. One of the main reasons is the exponential growth of evangelical, especially Pentecostal, churches in the region. The Catholic church has felt the loss of these adherents as they have switched to the newer denominations, and church leaders, especially Pope John Paul II, have expressed their frustration with the exodus. In Guatemala, the pope urged the lost to return to the fold explaining that "All of those who have at sometime prayed the most Holy Virgin, even though they have strayed from the Catholic church, conserve in their hearts an ember of faith which can be revived" (Sywulka, 1996, p. 94). Other Catholic leaders have openly condemned evangelicals. Archbishop Próspero Penados del Barrio of Guatemala accused evangelicals of being "the opiate of the people," instruments of rich foreign governments and of practicing an easy faith demonstrating no social conscience (Sywulka, 1996, p. 94). The words seem to be reminiscent in their intensity of the attacks made by evangelicals on Catholics in the 19th century.

Evangelicals in Latin America have not bowed to pressure from the pope or ECT to stop evangelizing nominal Roman Catholics. Trustees of the Southern Baptist Conference Foreign Mission Board approved a motion to clarify the role for Baptist missionaries as they encounter other faiths (Evangelical-Catholic statement criticized, 1994). The motion stated, "We affirm the appropriateness of Missionary witness among populations and individuals characterized by nominal or former allegiance to any Christian denomination ... and we reject the suggestion that such witness should be characterized as 'sheepstealing,' proselytizing or a wasteful use of resources" (Evangelical-Catholic statement criticized, 1994, p. 18). The president of the National Baptist Convention of Mexico, Rolondo Gutierrez Cortez, considers ECT's ideas about evangelism to be "a way to evade Roman Catholic churches' responsibility for pastoral care on one hand and, on the other, evangelicals' responsibility of delivering a Christ-centered message of salvation and a Bible-centered message of faith and behavior" (Evangelical-Catholic statement criticized,

1994, p. 18). Evangelicals are responding to the Catholic calls to end this type of witnessing with a clear and simple "No."

The tensions have been further complicated by the emergence of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. Though it is not an evangelical church, the Universal Church reflects aspects of Protestantism, Pentecostalism, Catholicism and the Brazilian religion Umbanda (Serbin, 1996). While it incorporates ideas of these religions, including Catholicism, it has also set itself in direct opposition to the Catholic church. Members of the group even distributed "The Pope is the Antichrist" leaflets in Guatemala City (Sywulka, 1996). The Universal Church could be easily associated with evangelicals, in that it is a rapidly growing denomination which draws its members from groups of dissatisfied Catholics, it emphasizes worship styles similar to those of evangelical and Pentecostal groups, and in Brazil it has sought to create political alliances with a Baptist presidential candidate (Serbin 1996). It is easy to see how John Paul II could group the Universal Church with evangelical denominations as "sects and new religious groups who sow confusion and uncertainty among Catholics" (Sywulka, 1996, p. 94). Obviously the presence of the Universal Church and its similarities to evangelical churches only complicates the situation between evangelicals and Catholics.

Given these conclusions about the historical relationship between Protestants and Catholics, the ECT statement, the reactions of major religious leaders to ECT and the current situation in Latin America, what can be hypothesized concerning the future relationship between Protestants and Catholics?

Future of Evangelical and Catholic Relations

One cannot make an overarching statement about the future of evangelical and Catholic relations. As we shall see, the future of evangelical and Catholic relations in the United States will most likely be far different from the outlook for the groups in Latin America. Similarly, it is difficult to group the forecast for church fellowship with the

fellowship of individual Catholics and evangelicals. Therefore, I will look at the future of evangelical and Catholic relations within three constituencies: Latin America, The United States, and individual believers in the United States.

Evangelical & Catholic relations in Latin America

ECT was, in part, an attempt to address the relationship between evangelicals and Catholics in Latin America. It is most likely, however, that ECT will have minimal or no impact on the situation in Latin America. The future of evangelical and Catholic dialogue in Latin America over issues of evangelization looks bleak. One cannot expect major changes in the dynamics of the relationship without some sort of de-escalation of hostility between the two groups. There are a number of reasons supporting this conclusion.

First is present distrust present between the communities. This is best evidenced in Pope John Paul II's recent statement labeling evangelical groups as divisive sects. Evangelicals also distrust the ability of Catholics to adequately disciple and hold unto their adherents. This distrust serves to magnify the existing theological divisions.

Another reason why progress seems unlikely is the fact that the evangelical groups are so new. It is easier to recognize the legitimacy of the another religious group if they have been established and active for a long period of time. It is difficult, for reasons beyond the understood ecclesiological reasons, for the Catholic church to recognize evangelical denominations as legitimate bearers of the gospel to the people in Latin America, when evangelical denominations are virtually new borns compared to the long-standing Catholic presence. Without such recognition, even on an informal level, substantial dialogue seems very unlikely. The growing numbers, power and influence of evangelicals does not help the situation; nor does the rise of the Universal church of the Kingdom of God because these trends only threaten the position and influence of the Catholic church in the region.

Finally, change is not foreseeable in the relationship between evangelicals and Catholics in Latin America because there is little incentive for unity. As it was demonstrated earlier in this paper, political factors played a substantial role in achieving the current level of

cooperation between Catholics and evangelicals in the United States. Such political factors are not at work in Latin American nations. In some places, such as Brazil where the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God is seeking to create political alliances with evangelicals against Catholics, political factors may even be working against the construction of unity between evangelicals and Catholics.

It is for these reasons that the prognosis for substantial improvements in evangelical and Catholic relations in Latin America looks grim. Even the possibility of cooperation in the United States becoming contagious and spreading to other regions seems to be, at best, a very unlikely possibility. Change may someday occur in this situation, but the two groups will need to learn how to trust each other through political cooperation, or other means before their theological unity will be discovered.

Evangelical and Catholic relations on a formal level in the United States

In contrast to the situation in Latin America, the future of evangelical and Catholic relations in the United States looks cautiously optimistic. I forecast that there will be continued discussion among evangelicals about what types of cooperation are legitimate. There is as yet no strong consensus on this issue. Catholics too are divided over the extent to which they would like to work with evangelicals. Thus, I would like to consider the likelihood of various proposed outcomes concerning the appropriate level of cooperation.

It is very likely that almost all evangelicals and many conservative Catholics will accept each other as allies in the culture war. I hypothesize this for two reasons. First, the culture war shows no signs of disappearing soon. Cultural issues such as abortion, euthanasia, values education and school choice are still among the hottest political issues today, and the third wave of the Christian conservative movement continues to thrive. If the culture war continues to be waged, one would expect evangelicals and Catholics to become increasingly comfortable with political alliances. Perhaps evangelicals will even embrace some of the traditional Catholic positions on issues such as arms control, capital punishment, and social justice. Second, there are no theological obstacles to these types of

alliances. This makes cooperation on this level easy for both groups. Thus, one can expect many evangelical and Catholic leaders to push for further cultural and political alliances in the future.

Though it is far from certain, there is a good chance that para-church cooperation will also become more acceptable. Para-church cooperation is the level of unity which the signers of ECT advocate. This idea will gain greater support in part because of the ECT statement. There is no doubt that the visibility of ECT's signers will sway some to support para-church cooperation in much the same way in which Colson's book, *The Body*, did a few years earlier. Furthermore, Para-church cooperation does not require the same degree of theological unity which formal ecumenism would involve. One example of para-church cooperation is Luis Palau's 1996 Chicago evangelistic crusade. Though the evangelical led crusade was not able to get the official diocesan endorsement of the Catholic church, Catholic priests were involved in leadership positions on the crusade committee (Palau Launches Chicago Crusade, 1996). Some evangelicals will continue to be critical of this type of communion, as will some Catholics. This group will continue to be weary of any shared ministries. The debate over para-church cooperation among Catholics and evangelicals will be an interesting one to observe. I believe that it will not be resolved for some time, but that the support for the ideas of ECT will grow over time as individual Catholics and evangelicals build longer and deeper Christ-centered relationships.

In spite of the progress being made on the para-church level, it is clear that there will be no evangelical and Catholic unity on an ecclesiastical level for some time. Evangelical denominations will not be engaging in fellowship with the Catholic church in any official way. The theological boundaries are simply too high and too steep for such unity. There also seems to be little hope of further progress in theological dialogues. Alister McGrath explains that there are limits to how far official ecumenism can take us, "the official dialogue between Protestantism and Roman Catholics has probably gone as far as it can go, and it would be unrealistic to look to it for further progress." (McGrath, 1994, p. 215).

Unless either evangelicals or Catholics retreat from their deeply held theological positions there will be no unity between the churches on this level.

The future of individual relationships between evangelicals and Catholics

The greatest potential for fellowship between evangelicals and Catholics in the immediate future will occur on the individual level. Alister McGrath (1994) makes the following prediction:

But what I do expect to happen is this: an "unofficial ecumenism" will grow both in its extent and influence, with individual evangelicals exploring the attractions of Roman Catholicism (as shown by Kim Riddlebarger) and increasing numbers of individual Roman Catholics being drawn to evangelicalism while generally remaining publicly loyal to their church. In the short term this will probably lead to a growing warmth between evangelicals and Roman Catholics, despite the substantial official doctrinal divides between them. I would expect this to be catalyzed by a growing sense that Christianity as a whole needs to stand up at every level against an increasingly militant secular culture, with local collaboration being seen as a legitimate way for Christians to come together and fight for their mutual rights. It is not my intention to defend or criticize this trend; I am simply reporting it and assessing its basis and potential impact. It is something that evangelicalism needs to be aware of. (p. 215)

I believe that McGrath is right in asserting that an unofficial ecumenism will continue to grow as a result of relationships built on an individual level, and in that there will most likely be a growing warmth generated between the two groups in spite of their doctrinal differences. I do not think this will be due to the fact that large numbers of evangelicals will explore the attractions of the Catholic church, but more because they will explore new relationships with Catholic believers. Similarly, Catholics will probably not flood into evangelical churches at an unprecedented rate, though some might experiment with evangelical devotional styles or participate in the evangelical sub-culture. Catholics and Evangelicals may find themselves separated on Sunday morning, or Saturday night, but they may be more willing to come together for weeknight Bible studies or fellowship groups. Catholics and evangelicals will continue to build deeper and more lasting friendships on an individual level. There are a number of reasons why I believe this to be true.

It is revealing to note that it was individual relationships which Colson and Neuhaus suggested as one of the major initiating factors in ECT. After observing many Catholics and evangelicals fighting together in the trenches of the culture war, Colson and Neuhaus began to explore the possibilities of agreeing on some of the issues in a more formal way. Thus, the building of individual friendships between evangelicals and Catholics is not anything new, rather it is the continuation of a trend which sparked the ECT document itself. The ECT document will most likely not prove to be the cause of more friendships between evangelicals and Catholics on a personal level, but it is a telling monument to those friendships.

Individual level friendships are the easiest type of unity to reach. There is virtually no theological commitment required in personal friendships. Thus, for evangelicals and Catholics, the most important theological step would be to recognize each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Though this may be difficult for some theologians or persons who still hold archaic biases against the other group, it is not much of a theological stretch for the average believer. Simply recognizing their shared relationship with Christ will open evangelicals and Catholics up to exploring and understanding one another's faith, fears, aspirations and weaknesses. Furthermore, individual friendships are sometimes much stronger than theological arguments. Relating to someone personally allows one to see the other's humanness and faith. Such things are often obscured when scholars debate doctrine.

Another reason why I believe that the maintaining and furthering of these relationships is probable is that most of the political changes have created an openness to individual communion, rather than organizational unity. The political changes which were noted took evangelicals and Catholics from being political enemies to becoming allies in the culture war. The ugly evangelical hostility towards Catholics has largely dissipated which gives evangelicals and Catholics the freedom to view each other as possible friends rather than as members of that other religious group.

Individual relationships are a level of cooperation with which both groups feel comfortable. For evangelicals, in particular, this type of unity reflects their understanding of the invisible nature of the body of Christ. Thus, it is a form of spiritual unity with which they are satisfied, without the messy theological compromises. Catholics are also comfortable relating to evangelicals as separated brethren, although further unity may not be possible without forcing evangelicals to accept the Roman Catholic churches teachings on the papacy and other controversial doctrines.

A vision of unity

The actual future of Catholic and evangelical relations remains uncertain. I do not believe that political and theological factors alone have shaped or will continue to shape the relationship between these two churches. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (1988) eloquently explains:

We know neither the day nor the hour, nor are we able to determine, when and how unity will come into existence. For what applies really and in its full rigor, is Melancthon's *ubi et quando visum est Deo* ["where and when it pleases God"]. In any case it should be clear that we do not create unity, no more than we bring about righteousness by means of our works, but that on the other hand we should not sit around twitteling our thumbs. Here it would therefore be a question of continually learning afresh from the other as other wile continually respecting his or her otherness. As people who are divided we can also be one. (p. 140).

The future of the church is in the hands of the Lord. Unity between evangelicals and Catholics will be achieved according to His timing.

In the mean time, the prayer group at the Lutheran college, which introduced this paper, continues to meet together and testify with their unity, together with thousands of other Christians throughout the world, to the love and power of the One who sent His son.

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