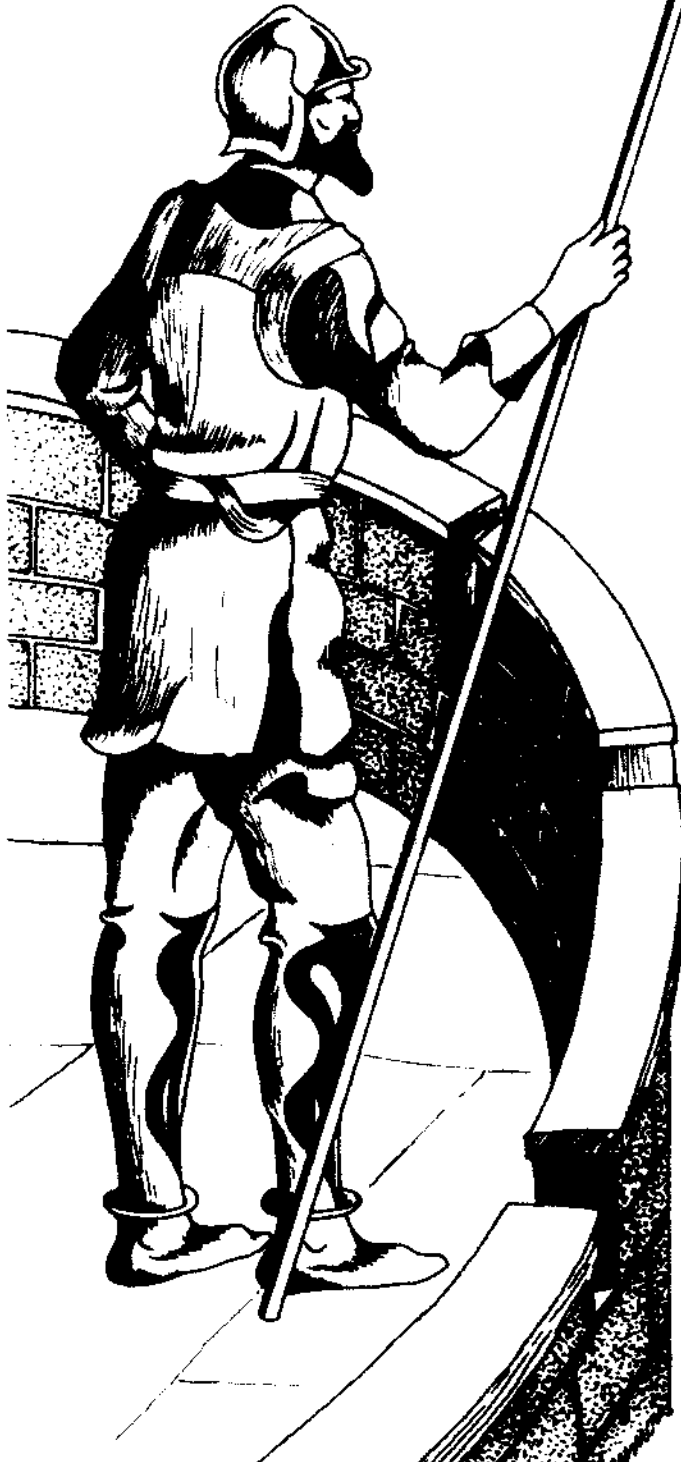


*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

*"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!"*

Eze. 7:6 (Moffat)



EXEGETIC OF REVELATION

THE 144,000 AND THE THREE ANGELS

(Part 3)

The first vision given to John after he was told, "Here is wisdom," is a climax to a series of revelations given in the previous chapters. He was told that "all that dwell on the earth shall worship" the first beast, except those whose names are in "the book of life of the Lamb." (13:8) It was also stated that those who would "not worship the image of the beast should be killed." (13:15) In Chapter 12, it was declared that those who overcome "the dragon" do so "by the blood of the Lamb," and these "loved not their lives unto death." (12:11) Now John sees a company with the Lamb on mount Sion, 144,000. This number stands in direct contrast to the "all" who worship, the dragon, beast, and image. (13:4, 15) These are commandment keepers; they have no other gods before Jehovah Elohim. (Ex. 20:2-3) Further, they do not bow down to, nor serve any "image." (Ex. 20:4-5) God honors them for their fidelity in the midst of universal apostasy by placing His name in their foreheads.

The 144,000 on mount Sion, the remnant of the seed of the woman who face the death decree in the warfare with the dragon, are also revealed in the first section of the book. (Chapter 7) There these victors are portrayed as having "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (v. 14) The picture is heightened by further comparison. The 144,000 receive "His Father's name." These "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." (14:4) The high point of this last section of Revelation before the Millennial reign is that "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." She is clothed in "fine linen, clean and white," a righteousness obtained by the blood of the Lamb. There is another "knitting" back into the first section. The victors of "Laodicea" sit with "the True Witness" (Gr. ho martus) on His throne. (3:21) They refuse to worship the dragon, beast and image - they keep the commandments - and they have the "witness" (Gr. marturian) of Jesus Christ. They are the "remnant" of the woman's seed, the "Queen" - the wife of the Lamb accepting only "His Father's name."

The 144,000 with the Father's name in their foreheads

- "the seal of God" (Rev. 7:3) - are in contrast to the "all" who worship the beast and receive "a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads." (13:16) With the emphasis on "the blood of the Lamb" as the means of victory, the 144,000 have nothing in their hands to bring, simply to the Lamb they cling. Those who trust in the merits of their own works - Cain worship - receive a mark in their right hand.

John next heard a Duo singing "a new song" in which the 144,000 unite their voices. These voices are accompanied "by harpers harping on their harps." (14:2-3) "The voice of many waters" is the voice of "the Son of man." (1:15) The voice "of a great thunder" is God Himself. Zephaniah seeing "the remnant of Israel" who do no iniquity, neither is a "deceitful tongue found in their mouth," foretells that the Lord God "will joy over (them) with singing." (3:13, 17) [See John 12:28-29, and note the phrase, "lightnings and thunderings and voices" associated with descriptions of the Throne of God in Revelation 4:5; 16:17-18.] An interesting question for consideration is why and what is the "new song" which only God, the Lamb and the 144,000 will sing together.

The 144,000 are indicated as having been "redeemed from among men." (14:4) James White made an insightful observation on this point. He wrote - "Not out of their graves; no, no, - 'from among men.' They must, therefore, be the living saints who are changed to immortality at the coming of the Lord." (R&H, May 9, 1854, p. 124; emphasis his) These are declared to be "the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." Here again is the Divine Duo with a stated relationship of the 144,000 to Them. This entwining picture should be carefully considered:

- 1) The 144,000 are with the Lamb on mount Zion with God's name in their foreheads.
- 2) The Lamb and God sing a "new song" in which only the 144,000 can unite their voices.
- 3) The 144,000 become "first fruits" to God and the Lamb.

If James White's observation first penned in 1850 is correct, and we believe it is, this relationship between the 144,000 and the Divine Duo is further heightened by the fact that those who are translated without seeing death put on "immortality" in contrast to the "incorruption" of the resurrected saints. (I Cor. 15:51-54) The word translated, "immortality" (*athanasia*) is used only three times in the New Testament, twice in

I Corinthians 15:53-54, and once in I Tim. 6:16. Here in these related verses is a clear suggestion that the 144,000 will share in an attribute of God as did the exalted Jesus who had laid aside this prerogative to accomplish redemption. This resurrected Christ is also called, "the first fruits." (I Cor. 15:23)

There is an interpretation read into these verses which designates the 144,000 as the instruments by which God brings together the "great multitude" of Revelation 7:9. Inasmuch as the 144,000 are discussed in both Revelation 7, and 14, we need to pause and consider the two prophetic pictures together. In Revelation 7, the question is asked, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" (v. 13 NKJV) There is no question but that the great multitude are arrayed in white robes. The text so states. (7:9) It also declares that the "multitude" come from "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues."

Applying the same question asked by "one of the elders" in Chapter 7 to Revelation 14 in regard to the 144,000, the answer is - they result from the Three Angels Messages, which are likewise given not only to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (14:6) but also to them "that dwell on the earth." The 144,000 are not only "redeemed from among men," but also are "redeemed from the earth." (14:3) Here a judgment call must be made once again. Are we to interpret "earth" as the symbolic "earth" of the continuous prophecy of Revelation 12 & 13, or do we interpret the word as applied to the planet as a whole?

From the picture in Revelation 14, must be added the descriptive concept of the 144,000 - "in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." (v. 5) In other words, "they keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." (v. 12) Compare Rev. 14:5 with I Peter 2:22, and consider the basic revelation of Chapter 12 - the "Seed" of the Woman, the Man-child, and the "remnant of her seed" which keep the commandments of God, and have the witness of Jesus. (12:17) Where then does the "great multitude" enter the picture? In Rev. 14:13 "a voice from heaven" is heard. The Holy Spirit speaks - "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." There is a point of time from which those who die in the Lord are called "blessed." The text would suggest that point as the beginning of the Three Angels' Messages.

We next turn our attention to the Three Angels

and their messages. Immediately we face a problem. How are we to identify these angels, as symbols or real angels? We have said that they represent a movement. We have perceived that movement to be the Adventist Movement. However, there are more than three angels in Revelation 14. Besides the three which "fly in the midst of heaven," there are three other angels: two come "out of the temple," and one "out from the altar." (vs. 15-18) One from the "temple" and the one from the "altar" are involved with "the great winepress of the wrath of God" and "the city." (vs. 19-20) The previous reference where "temple," "altar," and "city" are associated together is Rev. 11:1-2. The references previous to Rev. 11:1, where the "altar" is seen is in Chapters 8 & 9. There it is called, "the golden altar before the throne." (8:3; 9:13)

Our problem is that if we interpret the three angels flying in the midst of heaven as an earthly movement, how can we interpret the last three as literal? If all are symbolic of "movements," what movements do the last three represent? How do we interrelate these angels which come out of the temple with the two temple scenes of Chapter 11: 1, 19? Either we say that they mean something different in Revelation 14, or we say that they must be given a consistent identification in each reference where the term is used. Whichever interpretive decision we make, we come face to face with the realization that there are still areas in the book of Revelation that need prayer and study.

A suggestive interpretation of the angels of Revelation 14 might be found in the designation of the sixth angel. He had "authority ("power" - KJV) over the fire." (v. 18 Gr.) In Revelation 16, the angel of the third plague is spoken of as "the angel of the waters." (16:5) Throughout the entire book, angels are given specific responsibilities in carrying out the directives that come from the throne of God. Thus we could say that the first angel of Revelation 14 was given the "authority" to see that the everlasting gospel with its specific emphasis for earth's last hour was implemented. This he did through the Advent Movement. From this viewpoint, the "angels of God" in Revelation are real beings - "ministering spirits" - placed in charge of God's plans and purposes to bring about the full realization of the victory of "His Christ." (12:10)

Considering the messages of the first three angels of Revelation 14, as we seek to let the text speak, we face problems in harmonizing what the text says with what our tradition has read into these verses.

The first angel comes in the midst of heaven "having the everlasting gospel." (14:6) It is age-long (alonion); the same gospel as promised to Eve in the beginning, and realized in the victory of the Man-child. It is to go not only to "them that dwell on the earth," but also to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." It carried a specific message. "The hour of God's judgment is come." "Is come" (elthen) is in the past tense (Gr. aorist). When this angel gives its message, the judgment has commenced. The message of the first angel is not a message telling of something to come, but a proclamation of what has begun - God's judgment hour. Further it is connected with three imperatives: 1) "Fear God," 2) "Give glory to Him," and 3) "Worship Him who made."

This message could not be given until the Judgment had begun in Heaven no more than the Spirit could come on Pentecost until the enthronement of Christ as High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary. (See Acts 2:33) Thus the first angel began to sound after 1844, not before. It is also a historical fact that the Movement directed by this angel did not see the sanctuary truth of the final atonement of the great High Priest, or the Sabbath truth until after October 22, 1844. Further, since this message is a part of the age-long gospel, it will continue to be proclaimed till the close of all human probation. The other two which follow only join their voices with this first angel.

The second angel proclaims - "Babylon is fallen, is fallen." Again, this is in the past tense (epesen). When this angel sounds, there is an accomplished fact. In fact, the reason for the fall of Babylon - "because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" - is in the Greek perfect tense (pepotiken), indicating completed action. The message of this angel is that the "nations" to whom "the everlasting gospel" was to be proclaimed, instead of accepting it, chose to drink of Babylon's wine under religious duress.

The third angel joins the other two. However, in John's recording of this message, he places it in the present tense - "If any man is worshipping (proskunei) the beast and his image, and is receiving (lambanei) a mark..." (14:9) This message, therefore, except in a warning of what will be, cannot be "present truth" until the "mark" is in place, and the proclamation to worship is made. It needs to be kept in mind that the cause to worship this beast is contingent on the fact that "the deadly wound was healed." (13:12)

When we consider the "wisdom" and "understanding" given to John in the previous chapter (13:18), we discover that the basic element in this warning is against the worship of man for the "beast" is a man! The third angel joins his voice in warning that the rejection of the everlasting gospel's imperatives - "Fear God, and give glory to Him... and worship Him who made" - and in its place, worshiping man in whatever form that may take, brings "the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture." (14:10)

In the final confrontation when all that dwell on the face of the earth bow in worship to the beast that had a deadly wound and "was healed," there will be a "remnant of Israel" who, as the Three Worthies before them, refuse to bow to the image - they will keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (14:12) It will be a trying ordeal for it will reveal the "endurance" (patience - KJV) of the saints. "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matt. 24:13)

This verse - 14:12 - is interesting in that not only do the "saints" **keep** the commandments of God, they also **keep** the faith of Jesus. We hear much about "keeping" the commandments of God, but we hear little, if any thing, about keeping the faith of Jesus. This word, "keep" (*tereo*) is the same word as used in the blessing pronounced upon those who "**keep** those things which are written" in the book of Revelation. (1:3; 22:7, 9) John uses this word frequently in both his Gospel and first Epistle. In these books, it is used primarily with keeping the commandments, and the sayings of Jesus.

We might ask, does the keeping of the faith of Jesus mean entering into the experience He entered, in both Gethsemane and Calvary, where unable to see through the darkness, He simply prayed, "Thy will be done. Father into thy hands I commend my spirit." Will the 144,000 who go with the Lamb "withsoever He goeth," have also gone with Him through their Gethsemane and Calvary?

‡

"One thing will certainly be understood from a study of Revelation, - that the connection between God and His people is close and decided." (TM, p. 114)

LET'S TALK IT OVER

In the weeks immediately following the release of the Special Report on "Adventists & Catholics Together," we have received continued clippings and letters telling of a similar "togetherness" in other places than Colorado. However, this past week (This is being written April 3) we received documentation of a different kind of togetherness involving Adventists and other religious bodies as well as Roman Catholics.

The first report came from Canada and told of the inauguration of the Outaouais Company into the sisterhood of churches in the Quebec Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The report was written by Claude Richli, the Executive Secretary of the Conference who "cut the symbolic ribbon." This was done "in the presence of Pastor Karl Johnson, Father Turcotte of the Catholic diocese of Hull/Gatineau and Pastor Deschamps of the United Church. (Messenger, February 1995, p. 11) The article did not state what part the Roman Catholic priest had in the special service. Any part would have been a "part" too much. His presence as a representative of the Catholic diocese should have been persona non grata. How could the church members, if they were taught the prophetic revelation of the Papacy, been comfortable with a Roman Catholic priest's presence at their acceptance into the sisterhood of Adventist Churches?

The second item received was a newspaper clipping from The Hartford (CT) Courant (March 25, 1995) with the caption running across the page - "Jews, Muslims, Christians to unite for interfaith Passover Seder Sunday." The news item read in part:

"More than 200 Jews, Christians and Muslims will participate in an interfaith Passover Seder Sunday at 6:30 p.m. at the Bethel A.M.E Church in Bloomfield.

"Co-sponsors include the church, Emek Shalom of Farmington, Temple Sinai in Newington, Masjid Muhammad of Hartford, Islamic Center of Bristol, St. Monica's Episcopal Church of Hartford, **Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church** in Bloomfield and Baha'i in the Hartford area." (Emphasis supplied)

Questions arise - Was this merely an unilateral act on the part of the pastor of the local Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bloomfield.

THE POPE SPEAKS -2-

In the previous issue of WWN, 6(95), we discussed briefly the encyclical issued by John Paul II outlining the preparation of the Roman Catholic Church for a great Jubilee in the year 2000. He divided the preparation into two phases, the second phase being the three years just preceding 2000. Each of these years will emphasize to a different member of the Trinity.

The year 1997 will "be devoted to reflection on Christ, the Word of God, made man by the power of the Holy Spirit." The Pope suggested that during this year there should develop "a deeper understanding of the mystery of the incarnation and of Jesus' birth from the Virgin Mary." He declares that the "affirmation of the central place of Christ ("as the one saviour of the world") cannot be... separated from the recognition of the role played by his most holy mother." He also calls for a "renewed interest [in] the Bible." This, however, is conditioned by a call for "a detailed study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church" which presents "'faithfully and systematically... the teaching of sacred Scripture, the living tradition of the Church and the authentic magisterium, as well as the spiritual heritage of the fathers, doctors and saints of the Church, to allow for a better knowledge of the Christian mystery and for enlivening the faith of the people of God."

The year 1998 "will be dedicated in a particular way to the Holy Spirit" because the incarnation was brought about "by that Spirit - consubstantial with the Father and the Son - who, in the absolute mystery of the triune God, is the person-love, the uncreated gift, who is the eternal source of every gift that comes from God." The one point that will be emphasized is that while the Spirit distributed "different gifts for the welfare of the Church," He subjected to the authority of the apostles "even those who were endowed with charisms." He notes that the Spirit brings hope of the establishment of the kingdom of God. For this reason "Christians are called to prepare for the Great Jubilee of the beginning of the third millenium by renewing their hope in the definite coming of the kingdom of God."

The year 1999 will be devoted to the Father in heaven "from whom the Lord was sent and to whom he has returned." Emphasizing that "God is love," the Pope interjected the Economic

agenda of the Roman Church calling for "reducing substantially, if not canceling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations."

The Pope writes, that "two commitments should characterize in a special way the third preparatory year: meeting the challenge of secularism and the dialogue with the great religions." On the second commitment, John Paul calls for "interreligious dialogue, in accordance with specific guidelines set down by the Second Vatican Council." Then he states:

"In this dialogue the Jews and the Muslims ought to have a pre-eminent place. God grant that as a confirmation of these intentions it may also be possible to hold joint meetings in places of significance for the great monotheistic religions.

"In this regard, attention is being given to finding ways of arranging historic meetings in places of exceptional symbolic importance like Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Mount Sinai as a means of furthering dialogue with Jews and the followers of Islam, and to arranging similar meetings elsewhere with the leaders of the great world religions."

As John Paul II approaches the conclusion of his encyclical - Tertio Millennio Adveniente - he defines the actual celebration of "the Great Jubilee." It is planned to "take place simultaneously in the Holy Land, in Rome and in the local churches throughout the world." In this phase of celebration "the aim will be to give glory to the Trinity... In this sense the jubilee celebration makes present in an anticipatory way the goal and fulfillment of the life of each Christian and of the whole Church in the triune God." Then there is to be another celebration in conjunction with the Jubilee. The pope describes it thus:

"Since Christ is the only way to the Father, in order to highlight his (sic) living and saving presence in the Church and the world, the International Eucharistic Congress will take place in Rome on the occasion of the Great Jubilee. The year 2000 will be intensely eucharistic: in the Sacrament of the Eucharist the saviour (sic), who took flesh in Mary's womb 20 centuries ago, continues to offer himself (sic) to humanity as the source of divine life."

An ecumenical suggestion is then introduced. The Pope continues:

"The ecumenical and universal character of the

sacred jubilee can be fittingly reflected by a meeting of all Christians. This would be an event of great significance, and so, in order to avoid misunderstanding, it should be properly presented and carefully prepared in an attitude of fraternal cooperation with Christians of other denominations and traditions, as well as of the grateful openness to those religions whose representatives might wish to acknowledge the joy shared by all the disciples of Christ."

The pope summarizes this objective in the concluding section of his encyclical. He notes that "the Church has endured for 2,000 years. Like the mustard seed in the Gospel, she has grown and become a great tree, able to cover the whole of humanity with her branches. The Second Vatican Council, in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, thus addresses the question of membership in the Church and the call of all people to belong to the people of God: 'All are called to be a part of this Catholic [Universal] unity of the new people of God... And there belongs to it or are related to it in various ways the [Roman] Catholic faithful as well as all who believe in Christ, and indeed the whole of mankind, which by the grace of God is called to salvation.'" (Emphasis supplied)

Against this backdrop of the Papal plans for the year 2000, there must be considered how the designs and purposes of the Papacy, are stated elsewhere. From another encyclical - Redemptor Hominis - Malachi Martin summarizes the Papal objective for the solution of the world's problems - "hunger, violation of human dignity and human rights, war and violence, economic oppression, political persecution - any and all of these can be solved **only** by acceptance and implementation of the message of Christ's revelation announced by the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church." (Keys of This Blood, p. 74; emphasis mine)

While this Encyclical - Tertio Millennio Adventiente - emphasizes the Second Vatican Council as the source of a so-called "new look" in the Roman Catholic thinking, this present Pope has also reached back to Leo XIII. In an encyclical - "Centesimus Annus" - issued in 1991, John Paul II marks "the centenary of Pope Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum. The reaction to this Centennial Encyclical by John Paul II dare not be overlooked, and the thinking of Leo XIII must also be considered as it is up-dated by this present Pope.

The Ethics and Public Policy Center, a Roman Catholic oriented research and publication organization established in 1976, published a book

on this papal encyclical - A New Worldly Order. Edited by the president of the Center, George Weigel, this book consists of a series of essays on the pope's pronouncement. The opening paragraph of Weigel's Preface is immeasurably significant. It reads:

"It wasn't supposed to happen like this. One hundred years ago, not even the most fervent Catholic would have predicted that an encyclical by the Bishop of Rome, at the end of the twentieth century, would be front-page news in virtually all the world's major newspapers, the subject of intense scholarly debate among evangelical and liberal Protestants, Jews, and Catholics, and a matter of considerable interest to corporate executives, trade union leaders, and government officials. And yet that is precisely what happened in May 1991 when Pope John Paul II issued the encyclical Centesimus Annus (The Hundredth Year") to mark the century of Pope Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum and to set the future intellectual direction of Catholic social teaching." (p. ix)

No one reading this reaction to a papal encyclical can doubt that the "deadly wound" has been healed. But what about Leo XIII? He was the first pope elected after the loss of temporal power by the Papacy in 1870. His pontificate covered the years from 1878 to 1903. His predecessor, Pius IX, who refused to deal with the Italian government, and who because of the loss of temporal power assumed the role as "prisoner of the Vatican," issued in 1870 the dogma of Papal infallibility which was confirmed by Vatican Council I. This centralization of power and authority in the Roman Pontiff, was clearly defined by Leo XIII in his Great Encyclical Letters. He wrote - "We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty." (p. 304) "The supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds, therefore, requires, together with a perfect accord in the one faith, complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, as to God Himself." (p. 193)

In Leo XIII's letter, Immortale Dei, he outlines "the Christian constitution of states" by saying that "the state" should profess the Catholic religion, and the Roman pontiffs should have "the power of making laws." He decried the American system of separation of church and state, and wrote that the Catholic Church "would bring forth more abundant fruits if, in addition to liberty, she enjoyed the favor of the laws and the patronage of the public authority." The basic documentation of Leo XIII's religious and

political philosophy can be found in Facts of Faith, pp. 61-62, 256-261. (This book can still be obtained from the Foundation for US\$10.00 postpaid. Additional \$2.00 postage required for Canada & Overseas mailing)

The book - A New Worldly Order - has a subtitle - "John Paul II and Human Freedom." This expression, "human freedom" seems to be a substitutionary catch phrase for "religious liberty." In the discussion of Evangelicals & Catholics Together we noted the use of the expression, "ordered liberty." (WVN, XVIII-4(95), p. 4). Are "ordered liberty" and "human freedom" to be equated? Weigel perceives of Centesimus Annus as touching "on virtually every aspect of public life at the end of the twentieth century." (p. x) Only as a careful study can be made of what the present pope's implementation of human freedom, and ordered liberty would mean can the full import of the planned Great Jubilee be seen. Weigel writes:

"Centesimus Annus should be of special interest to Americans. For better or for worse - and usually for both - the United States is the test bed for modernity, and for whatever-it-is that's going to come after modernity. We are the world's only superpower whose moral raison d'etre is freedom. As a nation 'conceived in liberty,' and as the leader of the party of freedom in world politics, the United States ought to pay careful attention to what the most influential leader in the contemporary world has to say about the many dimensions of freedom, and about the intimate relation between freedom and truth: particularly the 'truth about man,' which has been such a prominent theme in the teaching of John Paul II since his election in 1987." (p. 2)

Nagging questions remain - Does the word "truth" used in the papal encyclicals mean "the acceptance and implementation of the message of Christ's revelation announced by the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church" as stated by Malachi Martin rather than the Biblical meaning of the word? Can the concept of "human freedom" as envisioned by John Paul II be equated with the "religious liberty" in which this nation was conceived, or is this "human freedom" a cover phrase for Leo XIII's agenda?

"It would be very erroneous to draw the conclusion that in America is to be sought the type of the most desirable status of the Church, or that it would be universally lawful or expedient for state and church to be, as in America, dissevered and divorced." - Leo XIII

Let's - From page 4, col. 2

Connecticut, or was this conference approved? If unilateral, has there been any conference response? If conference approved how high up the hierarchical ladder did the approval come from?

Then one final question that covers both incidents - When did we lose the uniqueness which truth brings and why?

whg

(If you wish a copy of the article from the Canadian Union Messenger, and the clipping from The Hartford Courant, send a #10 self-addressed stamped envelope to the Foundation office - P. O. Box 69, Ozone, AR 78254)

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Final Call:

1995
ANNUAL FELLOWSHIP
July 31 - August 5
On Campus

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"When Christ saw in the Jewish people a nation divorced from God, He saw also a professed Christian church united to the world and the Papacy" - Kress Collection, p. 153

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