

Drawing Aside the Purple Curtain

The Papal System Today: an Analysis of the News

PROTESTANT LEADERS PRAISE THE POPE OF ROME

By Shaun Willcock

*In my recent article, **The Death of Pope John Paul II, the Pope of Rome**, I wrote: “You will now begin to hear the praises heaped upon his head by so-called ‘Christian’, ‘Evangelical’ leaders the world over: men like Billy Graham, for example... and many, many others will all sing his praises, speaking of him as a great Christian man, many even saying he was the greatest Christian man in all the world! They will tell the world that he is now in heaven. For weeks to come, we will hear such men saying such things!”*

*I also wrote of “the tragedy of blind leaders of the blind – so-called ‘Protestant’ leaders, calling themselves Evangelicals – speaking well of this Antichrist, praising him, and actually holding him up to a world of lost sinners as an example of Christ-likeness and faithfulness to the Gospel!... The death of this pope will reveal the hearts and motives and real natures of many, many highly-esteemed Protestant ministers! It will show who they **really** serve and follow: Christ, or the devil! It will bring to light, again, for those with eyes to see, that these men are wolves in sheep’s clothing, deceitful workers!”*

*And: “Now, as never before, Christians will see just how utterly blind and deceived the world is – **including** the so-called Evangelical Christian world! If you had any doubt about the darkness that lies upon the hearts of Evangelicals in this day and age, you’ll see a demonstration of it now! You will be given a graphic picture of that darkness, as you will hear these men praising this pope.”*

Well, it did not take long for the “big-name” so-called “Evangelical Protestant” leaders to fall over one another in their scramble to mount a platform and blow a trumpet for the late John Paul II, thereby deceiving Roman Catholics and Protestants alike with their proclamation of a false “gospel” as they praised the false “christ” and his soul-damning heresies. What follows is just a sampling of the gushing praise for the ecumenical pope of Rome by ecumenical “Protestants”.

His funeral, “the greatest the world has seen”, “reflected,” as the London *Times* noted, “not just the charisma of the late Pope but also a better understanding of the Catholic Church with the growth of ecumenicism.” (*The Times*, April 7, 2005). It shows just how far the Protestant world has slid since John Paul II. became pope in 1978.

It was terrible enough that 200 world leaders attended the funeral, including at least 70 presidents and prime ministers; that for the first time in history, the future king of England attended; that for the first time in history, the president of the United States bowed before a papal casket; that the American flag was flown at half mast at the White House; and that the lights on the Empire State Building in New York City were dimmed – revealing that this man was considered to be the greatest religious and political figure on earth, and the head of the most powerful and influential religio-political institution on earth, as the Word of God reveals: “with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (Rev.17:2). This was terrible enough; but that so-called “Evangelical” leaders praised the pope as a true Christian – this was even more terrible!

We expect the leaders of the liberal, heretical denominations to praise the pope of Rome. For example, the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane, said, “Our sincerest condolences go out to Catholics worldwide on the death of their great leader. We thank God for his

ministry and that he has now been relieved from pain.... We also pray for the Catholic Church as it contemplates the election of the next Vicar of Christ.”¹

Did you get that? Ndungane called the pope a “great leader”, thanked God for the pope’s “ministry”, and that he is now “relieved from pain” (which his Anglican forefathers would not have said, believing as they did that the pope was the Antichrist foretold in Scripture, and that he goes to hell when he dies). And then this Anglican archbishop called the pope “the Vicar of Christ”! This title means the one who takes the place of Christ on earth! This is what *Papists* believe about their pope, but this was a statement by a high-ranking *Anglican*! We know that Anglicanism is well on the road to Rome, but a statement like this reveals just how far down that road it really is! And this was also shown by the fact that the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, attended the funeral of this Man of Sin, the first time in history that this had happened.

Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (what a misnomer!) and president of the Lutheran World Federation, said: “Lutherans will always remember John Paul II as the pope who fostered an unprecedented growth in Lutheran/Roman Catholic relations. Healing the wounds laid bare during the 16th-century Reformation took on new meaning as the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was signed in 1999. We live in new hope that the spirit of the living Christ will continue that work and bring about an even stronger relationship between the two church bodies.”²

Considering that Martin Luther’s own proclamations on justification were at the heart of the Lutheran break with Rome in the 16th century, one wonders why Mr. Hanson belongs to a Lutheran denomination if he believes it was all a big mistake, a misunderstanding that should never have happened. But Lutheranism, never biblical from the start, has, like all other “mainline” denominations, been infiltrated by Rome’s servants and Rome’s teachings. Truly, Rome has done its work well through the diabolical ecumenical movement, and so-called “Protestant” leaders are well and truly “Romeward bound.”

Pentecostal leaders praised him too. J. Delano Ellis, senior pastor of the Pentecostal Church of Christ in Cleveland, Ohio, and president of the Joint College of African-American Pentecostal Bishops, a man who had visited the Vatican several times, called the pope a man of prayer and deep devotion, and added: “But he’s also a pope that has reached out... as far as he could afford to reach. He’s reached out to other faith groups in an effort to create a sense of peace between us”. Ellis said that when he met the pope in 1991, “We stood there, talked for about five minutes about the Pentecostal community in America and throughout the world, and I told him we thanked God for his openness and his willingness to at least acknowledge our coexistence with *our Roman brothers and sisters*” (emphasis added). Although he did not view the pope as “the infallible one”, Ellis compared John Paul II with Paul in faithful resoluteness, and added that he treated him with esteem: “That respect even causes us, when he enters a room, to stand in deference to him. That’s not worship. That’s respect.”³

Time was when, despite Pentecostalism’s own doctrinal errors and false practices, almost no Pentecostal leader would have praised the pope of Rome, or spoken of Roman Catholics as brethren in Christ! But then, Pentecostalism, by its denial of the all-sufficiency of Scripture, holds to unbiblical human doctrines as well, just as Rome does, so it was only a matter of time before there would be a coming together of Romanism and Pentecostalism, and this has been going on for decades now. Ellis called the pope a man of prayer – yet he prayed fervently to Mary! Evidently this is of no concern to Ellis, who after all is quite happy that the pope reached out to various “faith groups.”

Ecumenical memorial services were held worldwide, with one in London’s Westminster Cathedral drawing 2000 Roman Catholics and “Protestants.” It was ‘ecumenical in tone, honouring a Pope who spent his 26 years in office extending the hand of God to other faiths.’⁴ Note that? The article did not say, “extending his own hand” to other religions, but “extending the hand of *God*”!

Still, as I said, we expect the religious leaders of Anglicanism, Lutheranism, Methodism,

Pentecostalism, and other institutions to praise the pope. But what a huge spiritual tragedy when we see so-called *Evangelicals* doing so as well! As noted by Adelle M. Banks of Religion News Service, “Whether up close or from a distance, Protestant leaders of a variety of stripes recalled the pope’s efforts on topics of mutual agreement and credit him with a legacy that advanced ecumenism. Mainline and evangelical, white and black, [they] noted their ties to the world’s most famous Catholic.”⁵

Here are the statements of a number of men, falsely upheld as “Evangelicals”, made after John Paul II’s demise:

Billy Graham said: “Pope John Paul II was unquestionably the most influential voice for morality and peace in the world during the last 100 years. His extraordinary gifts, his strong Catholic faith, and his experience of human tyranny and suffering in his native Poland all shaped him, and yet he was respected by men and women from every conceivable background across the world. He was truly one of those rare individuals whose legacy will endure long after he has gone.” Graham added: “His courage and perseverance in the face of advancing age and illness were an inspiration to millions – including me.”⁶

Graham also said of this pope: “It was my privilege to meet with him at the Vatican on various occasions, and I will always remember his personal warmth to me and his deep interest in our ministry. In his own way, he saw himself as an evangelist”.⁷

Billy Graham has for decades been speaking well of Roman Catholicism, refusing to condemn it as a false religion. As far back as 1979, for example, he said, “I think the American people are looking for a leader, a moral and spiritual leader that believes something. And the Pope does.... Thank God, I’ve got somebody to quote now with some real authority.”⁸ One would think that a supposed “Evangelical” like Billy Graham would be content to quote the Lord Jesus Christ, for “never man spake like this man” (Jn.7:46), and none has greater authority than He; but no, Graham chose rather to let Antichrist be his authority! In 1980, Graham said: “Pope John Paul II has emerged as the greatest religious leader of the modern world, and one of the greatest moral and spiritual leaders of this century”. Graham’s ecumenism, compromise, heresies, etc., have all been well documented.⁹ And yet millions of gullible, biblically illiterate Protestants flock to hear him preach. Graham recommends that Roman Catholics who “come forward” at his Arminian “altar calls” return to Rome afterwards. He himself has taught a number of Roman Catholic doctrines. And yet he is a Baptist, held up by millions as the greatest Christian of our times! Indeed, he is to ecumenical, Arminian “Protestantism” what John Paul II was to Romanism. In many circles he is the Protestant equivalent of the pope. The truth, however, is that Graham is as spiritually blind as any Roman Catholic.

Years ago, when I preached the series of messages entitled *Billy Graham: Serving the Papal Antichrist*, I pointed out that this pope had said that he and Graham were “brothers.” On April 2 this year (2005), Billy Graham was interviewed by talk show host Larry King. King asked: “Did he [John Paul II] tell you once that you and he were brothers?” And Graham replied: “That’s correct. He certainly did. He held my hand the first time that I met him.... when he was elevated to the papacy, I was preaching in his cathedral in Krakow that very day. And we had thousands of people in the streets. And watching the television today of Krakow has brought back many memories.” King then said: “You said that he was an Evangelist.” And Graham replied: “He was, indeed. He traveled throughout the world to bring his Christian message to the world. And we see tonight the outpouring from the world that he touched. And I think he touched almost everybody in the whole world.” Graham also said in this interview: “He suffered as much as anybody you could ever imagine.... And through it all, he taught us how to suffer. And I think in recent days he’s taught us how to die.”

The quotations given above are sufficient to prove that Billy Graham, the world’s most famous “Protestant evangelist”, is truly a blind leader of the blind. But then came this statement of his,

which clinches it (if clinching was still needed after such statements as those above!): Larry King asked him, “There is no question in your mind that he is with God now?” And Graham replied: “Oh, no. There may be a question about my own, but I don’t think Cardinal Wojtyla, or the Pope – I think he’s with the Lord, because he believed. He believed in the cross. That was his focus throughout his ministry, the cross, no matter if you were talking to him from personal issue or an ethical problem, he felt that there was the answer to all of our problems, the cross and the resurrection. And he was a strong believer.”¹⁰

Roman Catholics are not yet even saying that this pope is in heaven! – for until and if he is declared a “saint” of Rome, as far as they know he is in purgatory! – that mythical place where all good Papists go when they die, according to them. Billy Graham is certain that he is in heaven! The Bible, however, calls the popes of Rome “the man of sin and son of *perdition*”, in 2 Thess.2:3,4. Like Judas, also called “the son of perdition” in Scripture, the popes go to hell when they die, not heaven, for they are not Christians – each and every pope is the Antichrist foretold in God’s Word!

And yes, Mr Graham, John Paul II “believed in the cross”; but – which one? He believed, not in the atoning death of Christ on the cross for all His elect, but in the Roman Catholic cross! He believed in the crucifix, in the image on the crucifix, and in praying to that image!

Lastly, did you catch what Graham said of *himself*? “*There may be a question about my own, but... I think he’s with the Lord, because he believed.*” Billy Graham, uncertain about his own salvation? This man who has preached to millions the world over, urging them, in true Arminian fashion, to “decide for Christ” – this man is not even sure of his *own* salvation? That statement speaks volumes about this “Protestant” who has deceived millions with a false “gospel.”

Not to be outdone, Billy’s son Franklin Graham, president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, praised the pope and claimed that he and the pope preached the same Gospel! He said: “We disagree on a lot of doctrinal issues and I guess those disagreements will always be there. At the same time we did agree on the fundamentals that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God who came to this earth to die for our sins and when he died on that cross and shed his blood he took the sins of the world with him on the cross; and if we confess our sins and repent and by faith receive Christ into our hearts God will forgive us and cleanse us. These are fundamentals of the faith we agreed on and support and we appreciate this man and the stand he has taken on so many of these moral issues.”¹¹

As is so often the case with today’s “Evangelicals” and “Fundamentalists”, Franklin Graham praised the pope of Rome for his stand on “moral issues” – and it is this which is driving the satanic ecumenical movement more than anything else: Romanists and Protestants are uniting on “moral issues” – fighting abortion, for example – and ignoring their differences in doctrine. Franklin Graham is as deceived as his father: the pope of Rome did *not* agree on “the fundamentals.” John Paul II believed all the damnable heresies of Romanism: that regeneration is by baptism, that salvation is by works, that idols may be worshipped, that Mary is “Co-Redemptrix”, that Christ’s death was not all-sufficient, etc., etc.

Franklin Graham also said: “Pope John Paul II has modeled three qualities I will always associate with him – faith, courage, and forgiveness. He also reminds us that, regardless of one’s power or status, we all answer to an Almighty God. It is this God, and not the Vatican or the Catholic Church that Pope John Paul II looked to for strength and wisdom and guidance during often-perilous times in our world.”¹² No, Mr. Graham, the Papal Antichrist looked to his false religion, never to the true God.

James Dobson, head of Focus on the Family and another famous supposed “Evangelical” who is anything but, said this: “Today’s passing of Pope John Paul II is an immeasurable loss – not only to our friends of the Roman Catholic faith, but to the entire world. We found common cause with him and with the ‘culture of life’ he espoused so eloquently; the legacy he left us is to be cherished.” He

added: “While we grieve the profound loss of this remarkable man, we celebrate his life, his ministry and his undeniable impact on the world.”¹³ Another blind and deceived leader, deceiving others by his false “gospel.”

Another big-name, deceived “Evangelical” of our times is Charles W. Colson, founder and president of Prison Fellowship and co-founder of “Evangelicals and Catholics Together”. He said: “I had the honor of meeting His Holiness.... The pope’s willingness to reach out to Christians outside of the Roman Catholic faith was critical to promoting unity across the Christian family. His vision, his determination, and his loving spirit will be missed by Christians around the world.”¹⁴ Calling the Antichrist “His Holiness” is about as deceived as one can get.

“Big-name” Protestant deceivers fell over themselves to praise the Antichrist. “Evangelical” broadcaster Pat Robertson weighed in with these words: “He has been a man of great warmth, profound understanding, deep spirituality and indefatigable vigor... [I am] deeply grieved [at his death]. John Paul II has been the most beloved religious leader of our age – far surpassing in popular admiration the leader of any faith.”¹⁵

Jerry Falwell, a Baptist pastor and political activist, said: “The world has lost a great moral leader and we will certainly feel his loss... [the pope offered] unparalleled pro-life and pro-family leadership.”¹⁶ There it is again: “Protestant” praise for Antichrist because of his pro-life stance! But what about all his lies, his deceptions, his idolatries, his blasphemies?

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptists’ Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, said: “The disagreements that people.. who are Protestants have with John Paul II are things that are in addition to the foundations of the faith. He certainly is considered a spokesman for the Christian faith that has tremendous respect among all branches of Christendom both for his staunch defense of traditional Christian faith and his strong defense of political and religious freedom.”¹⁷

This man heads up a “Religious Liberty Commission” – and yet praises the man who headed up a religio-political system utterly opposed to religious freedom through the centuries! A system that persecuted unto death millions of Protestants and others, and still does so wherever it has the opportunity. Mr Land says the pope defended “traditional Christian faith.” What is Christian about Mary-worship, the mass, baptismal regeneration, idolatry, auricular confession, and all the other heresies of Romanism? Are these things really nothing but “additions” to “the foundations of the faith”, as Land stated?

Tony Perkins, a Southern Baptist and head of the Family Research Council based in Washington, DC, said: “Pope John Paul II has been one of the foremost leaders in building a culture of life. His contribution to the fall of communism in Europe cannot go unnoticed. Because of him, millions around the globe now have the freedom to practice their faith, especially as Christians.”¹⁸

Aside from the fact that Communism is *not* dead either in Europe or anywhere else, and Christians in various supposedly “former Communist” states are beginning to suffer persecution all over again, Perkins’ words reveal, again, that “Evangelicals” are willing to speak well of the pope of Rome, even embrace him as a brother in Christ, simply because he was anti-abortion and supposedly fought Communism. Note there is no testing of his false doctrines and his false practices, merely an acceptance because he was “pro-life.” But the head of the religious system that has massacred millions of people for centuries can hardly be accurately described as “pro-life”, now can he?

John H. Armstrong, of Reformation and Revival Ministries in the U.S., described as “an educational and evangelistic resource” serving “the Church and her leadership worldwide”, a

supposedly “Reformed” ministry, wrote an article entitled: “John Paul II: Why I Will Miss Him.” In the article he wrote: “Personally, I watched with a great deal of sadness and a sense of personal loss. Simply put, I came to love this man over the course of the last twenty-six years.”¹⁹

He continued: “It would not always have been so. I was taught that the pope always represented fierce opposition to the gospel of Christ. (Indeed, the historic Protestant confessions I read as a young man told me the papacy [and thus the pope] was the biblical figure of antichrist!) I was also taught, by my childhood pastors, that Rome was an opponent.”

His pastors, and those historic confessions of faith, were right. But this just shows how far removed present-day Protestants, even “Reformed” ones for the most part, are from the convictions of those who went before them.

He wrote: “John Paul II was a profound theologian. Parts of his system of belief must be questioned if one does not agree with dogmas such as papal infallibility and Marian devotion, as well as the heavy doses of mysticism that marked his teaching. But to focus only on what evangelicals disagree with is a mistake in my view.”

Do you see what is happening here? These “Evangelical” traitors can mildly criticise certain aspects of the pope of Rome’s teaching, and yet nevertheless praise him as a “profound theologian”! To the average churchgoer, then, sound doctrine becomes unimportant. The doctrines which divide true Christians from Roman Catholics are viewed as really not that important. “Yes, he believed certain faulty things, but he was a true Christian nonetheless.” This is the attitude. And, untaught in doctrine, Protestant pew-warmers readily embrace Papists as brethren in Christ. Armstrong went on: “He leaves a legacy of social justice and freedom [ah, that’s all that matters these days, to most “Protestants”!], joined with a conservative Christian outlook that affirms the great verities of catholic faith that all who truly love Christ affirm [note that the word “catholic” is spelled with a small “c”, to mean “universal” rather than *Roman* Catholic, as if this pope merely believed what true Christians believed. What a lie!].... He embraced the ecumenical goal of unity with all Christians while never wavering on the essentials of Christian faith.” What? The essentials of *Christian* faith? What were these? – Mary-worship, idolatry, the mass, baptismal regeneration, auricular confession, penance, and much more; would this “Protestant” minister have us believe that these blasphemies are the essentials of *Christian* faith?

He also wrote: “I am profoundly thankful for the life of this godly Polish pope, a man who daily listened to the preaching of the Word of God and who lived with explicit faith in Christ.”

The statements given above by various “Evangelical” leaders are by no means exhaustive. They are just a sampling of the many, many similar statements made by so many “Evangelicals” after the pope of Rome’s death. But they reveal the gross spiritual darkness that engulfs most of what is so falsely termed “Protestantism” in this day and age. They reveal just how successful the agents of Rome have been, via their ecumenical movement, in convincing the majority of professing “Protestants” that the Roman Catholic institution is a true Christian church, and that Roman Catholics are brethren in Christ. Paul, after describing two identifying marks of the Roman Catholic system (forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats), and saying that this system was spawned by “seducing spirits” (1 Tim.4:1-5), told Timothy that if he would be “a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine,” he would “put the brethren in remembrance of these things” (v.6). But these modern-day “ministers” not only fail to warn their flocks about this evil and monstrous religious system, they even encourage them to view its leader as the greatest Christian on earth, and its adherents as true brethren in the Lord! These false shepherds are not “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine”, for they do not “put the brethren in remembrance of these things”(1 Tim.4:6)!

What dark and evil times we live in. Let each one of the Lord’s people stand up and boldly affirm scriptural truth, separate from all false ministers, who speak lies in the name of the Lord, and expose their evil false doctrines and evil works!

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 10. Portion of transcript of the interview between Larry King and Billy Graham, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0504/02/lkl.01.html>.
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