

CHURCHES UNITE!

There are four major initiatives that are simultaneously working to unite the world's religions. This is a significant area for Adventists to watch. We understand that the final issues of this world's history will involve unity behind either our heavenly Father or unity behind the papacy. To create this possibility, there has to be religious and political unity in significant areas.

The World Parliament of Religions began its work in 1893, sponsored by Catholic leaders. It fell silent only to be revived in 1993 and 1999. They created recently *A Declaration of a Global Ethic*, which seeks world peace through religious tolerance. This declaration was prepared by Franciscan Hans Kung of Germany and adopted by 6500 delegates in 1993. Their stand is strong: Don't criticize religious beliefs. Only oppose anyone performing harmful acts when "religiously" motivated. They have appealed to the U.N. to adopt their concepts.

Union of Protestants Together and Catholics with Protestants. For several decades various churches have been seeking ways to unite on common beliefs. This is now moving at an accelerated pace. Last year we devoted two issues of this publication to review where we are at with regard to this. Many unity documents have been signed and administrative mergers of some Protestant denominations have begun. More important are an increasing number of churches signing accords promising tolerance of each other and pledging to curtail proselytizing of other church persuasions. A major spin-off from these initiatives is downplaying the significant beliefs that have made Protestant churches distinctive. The Catholic Church remains unmoved in all their positions and demands acceptance of their traditions. Protestants are looking with greater sympathy to the Vatican.

Roman Catholic Church. Right after the Lateran Treaty was signed in Rome in 1929, Pope Pius XI moved with lightening speed to influence politics in the U.S., court the favor of Protestant churches and set its eyes to unite church and state in the U.S.

Shortly after Vatican II was called by Pope John XXIII, the Vatican began to invite Protestants to "Come Home." This was followed by the Catholic Church working to gain international favor of Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc. Their success has been phenomenal. Great sympathy exists towards the "Peace" efforts of the Vatican.

Then on May 25, 1995, Pope John Paul II published an encyclical *Of Unum Sint, That They May Be One*. This was a major appeal to unify all Christian bodies because that was "Christ's call to all His disciples." The arguments are persuasive and meet favorably political, cultural and religious thinking. We know that papal power will once again influence and even impose their power on the world governments' decisions and policies – for a short period.

Since 1988 the papacy has been hosting, by U.N. invitation, an annual meeting with major world religions in Assisi, Italy, to discuss religious unification and political issues. The U.N. sees the Vatican as holding the *leadership* key to religious tolerance and unity to help bring world peace. Little do they know that Jesuit publications pointedly stated that the unity stance by the papacy is a sham only to gain *world power*.

United Religions Initiative. A very significant event just occurred on June 26, 2000 in

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. At the Carnegie Music Hall 300 individuals representing the major religions of the world signed the *United Religions Initiative*. This document was a joint effort by the private United Religions Initiative organization in San Francisco and the United Nations (UNESCO). This document is to serve as the U.N. framework to end international religious violence.

As we see initiatives signed, charters developed and active work going on to unify faith on the ground of tolerance and shared worship experiences, we also see the powerful hand of the *Holy See* being grasped to guide the world into peace in this new millennium.

“They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.” Jeremiah 6:14.

“Papists, Protestants, and worldlings will ... see in this union a grand movement for the conversion of the world and the ushering in of the long-expected millennium [of peace].” Maranatha, p. 260 (presumably 2001 on).

On August 28, 2000, a meeting of 1000 principal religious leaders from around the world will meet to discuss questions of peace, poverty and the environment. They will build on what these four organizations have worked on. A common thread of cooperation, identity and activity is being sought. The Catholic Church’s delegation will be led by Cardinal Francis Arinze, president of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue. This is significant since the Catholic Church is already a “Permanent Observer” representing the Vatican State. Combining the ecumenical delegation with this will be a major force for Catholic wishes.

We are on the verge of prophetic events becoming a reality. Why is this important? It sets the stage for the final themes of Revelation 13.

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EndTime Issues..., September 2000