

# Applying a Double Standard with Regard to Criticism of the Roman Catholic Church

In “A Response to the Christian Research Journal’s Recent Defense of the ‘Local Church’ Movement” (henceforth “Response”), Norman Geisler and Ron Rhodes apply a double standard in making inflammatory accusations against Witness Lee based on the third chapter of his book *The God-ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy* (henceforth *Practice*).<sup>1</sup> They condemn Witness Lee for making certain statements about the Roman Catholic Church (henceforth RCC) that are similar to statements they have made about the RCC in their own writings. Not only so, some of their allies have also made similar, and in some cases stronger, statements. Many of these accusations have been addressed previously on this site, yet Geisler and Rhodes have ignored those replies.<sup>2</sup> Geisler and Rhodes state:

Chapter Three from a book by Witness Lee titled, *The God-Ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy* in which he engages in a slanderous attack on ... “today’s Catholic Church.” ... [Lee says that] The Roman Church is infested with “Satan’s evil spirits” and “full of all kinds of evils. Evil persons, evil practices, and evil things are lodging there.” It is an “adulterous woman who added leaven (signifying evil, heretical, and pagan things).” It is “the Mother of the Prostitutes” and an “apostate church.” Again, it is “full of idolatry,” “against God’s economy,” and “saturated with demonic and satanic things.” If ever there were grounds for religious libel, this would be it.<sup>3</sup>

The subject matter to which Geisler and Rhodes so strongly object consists primarily of a few words and short phrases stripped from the context of *Practice*.<sup>4</sup> They combined these selected phrases with their running editorial comments to present an extremely sensationalized, unbalanced, and inaccurate view of Witness Lee’s teaching. Furthermore, it is evident that their criticism is an exercise in hypocrisy in light of:

- The strong criticism of the RCC by both the Reformers and their successors;
- Ascription of similar evils to the RCC by Ron Rhodes;
- Criticism of Roman Catholicism by Norman Geisler; and
- Strong statements about the RCC by allies of Geisler and Rhodes.

Not only have Geisler and Rhodes treated Witness Lee’s words unfairly by cobbling together a series of out-of-context fragments, but on the basic issue of criticism of the RCC, they have applied a blatant double standard.

## The Historic Protestant Position on Roman Catholicism

Witness Lee’s criticism of the RCC is often much less harsh than the criticism of Protestant teachers from the Reformation until the present time.<sup>5</sup> One of the earliest writings of Martin Luther after he took a stand against the RCC was the treatise “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church.” The title alone equates the RCC with Babylon, an idea that Geisler and Rhodes apparently reject as harsh, regrettable, and slanderous. In this treatise, Luther says:

But after hearing and reading the super-subtle subtleties of these coxcombs, with which they so adroitly prop up their idol (for my mind is not altogether unteachable in these matters), I now know for certain that the papacy is the kingdom of Babylon and the power of Nimrod...<sup>6</sup>

Luther purposely used “coxcombs” as a derogatory term to portray his opponents as those who pretended to rank and authority. The “idol” Luther referred to was the Pope himself. Here, and in many other places, Luther’s criticism of the RCC was much stronger than Witness Lee’s. Luther said that if the Antichrist himself were pope, he could add nothing to Rome’s wickedness, stated that the RCC was “a licentious den of thieves ... the most shameful of all brothels” and surmised that the RCC deserved to have Satan as its pope.<sup>7</sup> Luther was not alone in speaking so strongly. Luther was joined by John Calvin, John Knox, and John Wesley.<sup>8</sup> Yet Geisler and Rhodes have not attacked these teachers as slanderous and libelous. In fact, Rhodes uses Luther and his criticism of the RCC as a positive example to rouse today’s believers to stand up for the truth of the gospel:

As Christians, we are called to contend for the faith by “telling it like it is.” Look at it this way: Would we have had a Reformation if Martin Luther hadn’t told it like it was to the Roman Catholic church? No, we wouldn’t. Luther saw a deviation from “the faith” and he accordingly contended for the faith. We must follow Luther’s example.<sup>9</sup>

If Geisler and Rhodes truly object to the statements they listed and portrayed as slanderous, they have no choice but to similarly condemn Luther, other Reformers, and the many Christian teachers who came after them who were also highly critical of the RCC.<sup>10</sup> Rather than condemnation, Rhodes offers praise for Luther’s stand against the RCC, however “harsh and regrettable” his language may have been.

What Witness Lee wrote in *Practice* is much more in line with the traditional Protestant position concerning the RCC than are the protests of Geisler and Rhodes. In fact, Witness Lee’s words pale in comparison to those of many other respected Christian teachers.

### **Ron Rhodes Criticizes Catholicism for Occult Involvement**

Although “Response” vehemently attacks Witness Lee’s words concerning the RCC, its authors have written similar criticisms. In *The 10 Most Important Things You Can Say to a Catholic*, Ron Rhodes equated the RCC teaching of purgatory and its practical effect on Catholics with the occult, with apparitions, and with spiritism. Speaking of this matter Rhodes says:

Researchers John Ankerberg and John Weldon have noted an occult connection to the doctrine of purgatory. They observe that throughout the history of the Roman Catholic Church there have been widespread reports of apparitions alleged to be those of dead persons...<sup>11</sup>

After quoting Ankerberg and Weldon, Rhodes concludes:

This is nothing less than spiritism. And all forms of spiritism are condemned by God as heinous sin.<sup>12</sup>

In *Find It Quick: Handbook on Cults & New Religions*, Rhodes explains the evils he attributes to spiritism. He again defines spiritism as “heinous sin” and further as the equivalent of channeling, an occult practice, which he describes as an attempt to communicate with “allegedly departed human beings” or “other non-human spiritual

entities.” He then concludes that one of the dangers of spiritism is demon possession.<sup>13</sup> Rhodes states that one of the main features of occult practices is that:

...they place people in contact with supernatural powers, paranormal entities, or demonic forces... Occultism takes many forms but often includes such practices as trance states, séances, clairvoyance, spiritism (also called channeling)...<sup>14</sup>

Rhodes acknowledges that Catholic apparitions are a form of spirit contact. He further points out that spiritism can result in demon possession. To Rhodes, therefore, the “spiritual entities” contacted through apparitions (spiritism) are, in fact, evil spirits or demons. Rhodes associates all these things with the RCC: apparitions, spiritism, the occult, evil spirits, demons, and demon possession. Yet, Rhodes and Geisler object when Witness Lee speaks of the RCC being associated with “Satan’s evil spirits” and being “saturated with demonic and satanic things.” Apparently this is an acceptable criticism of the RCC when it is made by Rhodes but not when it is made by Witness Lee, even though Witness Lee’s criticism is based entirely on the Bible,<sup>15</sup> while Rhodes’ critique relies primarily on other sources.

### **Geisler Criticizes Catholicism for Heresy, Idolatry, and Mixture**

In an article posted on the John Ankerberg website and excerpted from Geisler’s book *When Cultists Ask*, Geisler comments on the RCC veneration of Mary. He says:

In addition, bowing down in veneration before any creature, even angels (cf. Col. 2:18; Rev. 22:8-9), is forbidden in Scripture. The Bible makes it clear that we are not to make any “images” of any creature or even to “bow down” to them in an act of religious devotion (Exod. 20:4-5). To call Mary “Queen of Heaven,” knowing that this phrase was borrowed directly from an old pagan idolatrous cult condemned in the Bible (cf. Jer. 7:18), only invites the charge of mariolatry. And mariolatry is idolatry. In addition, despite theological distinctions to the contrary, in practice many Catholics do not distinguish between the veneration given to Mary and that given to Christ.<sup>16</sup>

In this portion, Geisler associates idolatry and idols with the RCC. He accuses the RCC of adopting an “old pagan idolatrous cult” practice that has been “forbidden in Scripture.” He indicates that in practice the veneration of Mary in the RCC is the worship of something or someone other than God and amounts to “idolatry.” Yet, Geisler and Rhodes condemn Witness Lee’s use of similar terms.

In answering the question of whether or not the RCC is a false church, Geisler wrote, somewhat equivocally:

But is the Roman Catholic Church a false church? If Rome is judged by the standard of the fourteen (or sixteen) salvation essentials embodied in the creeds of the first five centuries, the answer is no. In this case, Rome is a true church with significant error. If judged by the standards of the Protestant Reformation, however, the answer is yes. In this case, Rome is a false church with significant truth.<sup>17</sup>

One is left to wonder both how Geisler would answer this question for himself and what would be his answer if the standard was the Bible rather than the creeds. Unable or unwilling to answer this question unequivocally, Geisler<sup>18</sup> further states, “Therefore,

Rome has ‘practical heresy’ if not both practical and doctrinal heresy.”<sup>19</sup> Finally, Geisler concludes:

Current Roman Catholicism in general is a combination of four factors: (1) a basic Christian doctrinal core, (2) a Roman hierarchical structure (borrowed from the dying Roman Empire), (3) a Jewish ritualistic form (borrowed from the Old Testament), and (4) significant pagan content and practices. Depending on the time and place, one or more of these factors may dominate. Thus, depending on the critic’s focus, one may get widely divergent conclusions about Roman Catholicism ranging from Christian to cult. To borrow the title of Jaroslav Pelikan’s excellent tome, this is “the riddle of Roman Catholicism.”<sup>20</sup>

Geisler’s four factors that constitute the RCC bring to mind Witness Lee’s teaching that the RCC is typified by the woman who mixes leaven with the fine flour in Matthew 13:33. The fine flour in the parable represents the person and work of Christ, which roughly corresponds to Geisler’s first point, the basic truths of the faith. The leaven that the woman mixed with the fine flour would be represented by Geisler’s other three points: hierarchy, ritual, and pagan things. Geisler described the RCC as a combination of these four elements, which implies a mixture. The meal offering, indicated by the fine flour in the parable, should consist of fine flour without any mixture of corrupting elements (Lev. 2:4-5, 11). In his description of the RCC, Geisler admits that it is a mixture of the things of God and three corrupting elements. In effect, he is saying that while the church should be pure and consist of Christ and the things of God, the RCC has mixed in corruption, or leaven, in the form of hierarchy, ritual, and paganism. Thus, according to Geisler, the RCC is an impure mixture incorporating even pagan things. Yet, in “Response” Geisler and Rhodes strongly attack Witness Lee for saying that the RCC is the “woman who added leaven (signifying evil, heretical, and pagan things),” even though Geisler’s own teaching supports Witness Lee’s point.

In other writings Geisler attacks the RCC concerning its errant teachings and practices: Mary as co-redemptrix and co-mediatrix, the immaculate conception of Mary, the assumption of Mary, the mass, the Eucharist, the Apocrypha, justification by works, the Magisterium, and papal infallibility among others.<sup>21</sup> He also is critical of evangelicals such as Charles Colson, J. I. Packer, and others who issued a joint statement of cooperation with Catholics.<sup>22</sup> Considering the seriousness of the claims he makes against the RCC, the real remaining “riddle” is that Geisler, along with Rhodes, so vociferously protests Witness Lee’s teachings about the RCC. It seems Geisler and Rhodes maintain that criticisms that are appropriate for them to levy against the RCC are not appropriate for Witness Lee to make. This is a flagrant double standard.

### **Geisler and Rhodes’ Allies Vehemently Attack Catholicism**

Both Geisler and Rhodes are allied with Harvest House Publishers and John Ankerberg. Geisler authored an amicus brief on their behalf during the litigation concerning *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions (ECNR)*, and Rhodes signed another amicus in the case. Geisler was listed as one of John Ankerberg’s consulting experts in the case, and Ankerberg depended on Geisler for his opinion concerning proposed changes to *ECNR*. Geisler has been a frequent guest on the John Ankerberg Show and has authored numerous articles posted on the Ankerberg Theological Research Institute (ATRI)

website. As pointed out previously, the attack by Geisler and Rhodes on the third chapter of *Practice* is similar enough to the attack on the same chapter on the Harvest House website to suggest collusion between the two parties. Geisler and Rhodes have published numerous books with Harvest House.

Both Geisler and Rhodes were also signers of the so-called open letter calling for a disavowal of statements made by Witness Lee, which, according to one of the signers of that document, was written in large part to support Harvest House and its authors in the *ECNR* litigation. Like “Response,” much of the content of the open letter is very similar to that of corporate statements posted by Harvest House on its website.

It is, therefore, both appropriate and instructive to examine what Geisler and Rhodes’ allies have written about the RCC, not necessarily to criticize any of the named authors or to either challenge or endorse their statements. Rather, this is done to illustrate further the double standard employed by Geisler and Rhodes in their attack on Witness Lee and his teaching.

### ***John Ankerberg and John Weldon***

Ankerberg and his former long-time researcher John Weldon published many statements stridently criticizing the RCC and accusing it of occult involvement. Without equivocation, they take the position that the RCC is not merely an errant Christian religion; it is simply not a Christian religion:

Now consider Roman Catholicism. The fact that it accepts many Christian doctrines is irrelevant. That it teaches salvation by works proves that it is not a Christian religion.<sup>23</sup>

So how do we finally assess Roman Catholicism? We can only evaluate it by the Bible and Rome’s own claims. In such light then should Roman Catholicism really be classified as the one true Church? Should it even be classified as Christian? No. Roman Catholicism is not the true Church and it is not even a Christian religion.<sup>24</sup>

Following a testimony of Weldon’s own experience as a Catholic, Ankerberg and Weldon conclude:

...[S]uch stories are anything but uncommon. But if so, the Catholic Church must be seen as a genuine hindrance to the cause of Christ.<sup>25</sup>

In *The Coming Darkness*, Ankerberg and Weldon accuse the RCC of the darkest, most demonic activities. For example:

There are also reported cases in Catholic monasteries. Dr. Vallee observes that “the most remarkable cases of sexual contact with nonhumans are ... in the archives of the Catholic Church” and he proceeds to list examples. Given the claims that (according to Investigative Reports TV series “Sins of the Fathers”) widespread homosexuality and, to a much lesser degree, pedophilia exist in some Catholic seminaries and among priests today (25 to 50 percent of priests were estimated to be homosexually inclined), one can only wonder if this phenomena has already returned. There are also cases of sex with alleged UFO occupants (e.g., the Villa Boas, Shane Kurz, and Cordelia Donovan incidents), which essentially parallel the incubi-succubae.<sup>26</sup>

It is painful to include such topics in this article, and it should be noted that Witness Lee's biblical criticisms of the RCC using scriptural expressions cannot be compared with this level of ignobility and sensationalism.

### ***Authors on the ATRI Website***

The ATRI website has a major category of articles dedicated to addressing errors and issues related to the RCC. The current index page<sup>27</sup> on Roman Catholicism on johnankerberg.org lists articles by John Ankerberg and John Weldon,<sup>28</sup> Mike Gendron, James McCarthy, Greg Durel, and others. One article by Gendron, an ex-Catholic, entitled "Roman Catholicism—Apostolic or Apostate?" concludes in this way:

Is the Roman Catholic Church guilty of apostasy? The evidence is overwhelming. The truth must be told in love with courage and conviction. The eternal destiny of millions of precious souls hangs in the balance. The Catholic Church has fallen away from the faith of the apostles and gone the way of apostates.<sup>29</sup>

Gendron, on the ATRI site, states clearly that he considers the RCC to be apostate. Geisler and Rhodes claim that when Witness Lee describes the RCC as an "apostate church," he is guilty of slander and religious libel. Gendron also has articles on the ATRI site addressing various aspects of the RCC entitled "Beware of Wolves in Sheep's Clothing," "Is a Catholic Christian an Oxymoron?" "Roman Catholics, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses," and "Eucharist Adoration: Worship or Idolatry?" among others.

After describing at length the strong rebukes the Lord Jesus had for the Jewish religious system of His time (described on the ATRI Roman Catholicism Index page as "scathing criticism") and comparing that system to the RCC, McCarthy says:

Jesus rejected the man-made authority structure of the first century Jews. He refused to submit to Tradition, the teaching authority of the scribes and the Pharisees, or the ruling authority of the Sanhedrin they represented. What Jesus rejected, the Roman Catholic Church has now restored. It has elevated Tradition to the same level of authority as God's inspired Scriptures. Its pope and bishops have laid claim to universal jurisdiction and sole teaching authority.<sup>30</sup>

It is clear from this article that McCarthy postulates that the Lord's strong rebuke, characterized by ATRI as "scathing criticism," of the Pharisees and Sadducees could also be applied to today's RCC.

Greg Durel, who also writes articles for Reaching Catholics for Christ, has articles on the ATRI site addressing the shortcomings of the RCC. In the introductory paragraph of the article "Signs of a Cult," Durel first states that there are seven principle signs for identifying a cult. In the article he says, "But for our discussion the word cult is simply a word that describes organized heresy." Concerning the RCC, Durel concludes:

The mysticism is clearly not biblical and certainly not necessary for anyone to be saved. Their insistence on such heresies places them at the top of the list of religious cults. That statement may seem a bit harsh, but it is nonetheless true. Catholicism does not differ from any of the cults where our first sign [*exclusivity*] is concerned. A closer look at the other signs of a cult further confirm the fact that Catholicism, while

large in number, humanitarian in practice, is still unbiblical and perhaps the mother of all “Christian” cults.<sup>31</sup>

Durel contends that its heresies place the RCC “at the top of the list of religious cults” and suggests that the RCC may be “the mother of all ‘Christian’ cults.” Although he says this may seem harsh to some, his defense of his harsh statement is that it is true. Certainly truth should be the determining factor in judging statements about the RCC. Durel’s language resembles that of Geisler when he commented (as noted above) that according to some evaluations the RCC may be seen as a cult.

Norman Geisler is a long-time associate of John Ankerberg and has appeared numerous times on *The John Ankerberg Show*. He has never condemned Ankerberg and Weldon for criticizing Roman Catholicism, although he has publicly castigated Witness Lee for doing so. Geisler clearly has one standard for his language and that of his allies but quite another standard for Witness Lee.

### ***Harvest House Publishers***

Many of the quotations used above to demonstrate the charges against the RCC made by Rhodes, Ankerberg, and Weldon were taken from books published by Harvest House.<sup>32</sup> The quote from James McCarthy taken from the ATRI site is adapted from a book also published by Harvest House. It seems that Geisler and Rhodes’ publisher has no qualms publishing criticisms of the RCC.

For example, Harvest House published Dave Hunt’s *A Woman Rides the Beast*. On the front cover of the book is a portion of Revelation 17:7 (“I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast...”) and a proclamation that the book is about “the Roman Catholic Church and the last days.” The back cover blurb reads, in part:

Who is this woman? Tradition says she is connected with the church of Rome. But isn’t such a view outdated? After all, today’s Vatican is eager to join hands with Protestants worldwide. “The Catholic Church has changed,” is what we hear. Or has it? In *A Woman Rides the Beast*, prophecy expert Dave Hunt sifts through biblical truth and global events to present a well-defined portrait of the woman and her powerful place in the Antichrist’s future empire. Eight remarkable clues in Revelation 17 and 18 prove the woman’s identity beyond any reasonable doubt.<sup>33</sup>

Both the front and back covers would have been developed by Harvest House Publishers with the author’s approval.

Hunt believes the RCC is the Babylon of Revelation and that she is the harlot, the whore of Babylon. Starting on page 68 there is a section titled “Who Is the Whore?” followed by a section beginning on page 77 titled “The Mother of Harlots and Abominations.” Hunt states, “Against only one other *city* in history could a charge of fornication be leveled. That city is Rome, and more specifically *Vatican City*” (emphasis in original).<sup>34</sup> In speaking of the popes of history, Hunt describes many of them as “master criminals, poisoners, adulterers, and mass murderers” who were nevertheless considered “infallible when they spoke *ex cathedra*” about faith and morality. Their lives were full of “lust, madness, mayhem, and murder.”<sup>35</sup> This list of blatant evils pales in comparison to Hunt’s association of the RCC with Hitler, Mussolini, the Holocaust, and Nazi atrocities.

In another Harvest House book by Dave Hunt, *Occult Invasion*, one finds such statements as "...millions ... refused allegiance to the Church of Rome because of its pagan/occult practices and apostasy" in a chapter titled "Occultism and the Roman Catholic Church."<sup>36</sup> Hunt further associates the RCC with voodoo:

Images, holy water, and Catholic rituals cannot be found in the Bible, but have all been adapted from paganism. Their counterpart is found today in voodoo and related cults.<sup>37</sup>

In the same chapter Hunt associates the RCC with Santeria, "... 'gods' who front for demons passed off as Catholic saints,"<sup>38</sup> "superstition and occultism,"<sup>39</sup> and shamanism.<sup>40</sup> This is a small sampling of statements from this chapter that characterize the RCC as something exceedingly evil.

Hunt's statements in *A Woman Rides the Beast* and *Occult Invasion*, both published by Harvest House, are far more inflammatory than any of the statements made by Witness Lee that apparently stirred Geisler and Rhodes into charging him with slander and religious libel. Once again, Geisler and Rhodes employ a different standard to judge Witness Lee than they apply to themselves or their allies.

### **Geisler and Rhodes Apply a Hypocritical Double Standard**

In examining the statements that Geisler, Rhodes, and some of their allies have written about the RCC and comparing them to sentence fragments excerpted from *Practice*, it becomes evident that there is a double standard at work in Geisler and Rhodes' assessment. Witness Lee's criticisms of the RCC are, in many cases, milder than the criticisms of Luther, Calvin, and others. Yet, Geisler and Rhodes choose to attack Witness Lee and to champion others who have said similar things.

Rhodes, in his writings, linked the RCC with apparitions, spiritism, occult practices, evil spirits, demons, and demon possession. He characterizes all these as "heinous sin," which indeed they are. Yet, he and co-author Geisler apparently bristle at Witness Lee's biblical critique.

Geisler linked the RCC to many evils. He wrote that in the RCC Mariolatry and idolatry are, at the very least, practical heresy, could be theological heresy, and amount to worship of someone other than God. Geisler has rightly pointed out that the term "Queen of Heaven," used by the RCC in relation to Mary, was taken from ancient pagan practices and is condemned by the Bible. Geisler stated that, depending on what standard one uses, the RCC may be either a true or a false church and that at certain times, under certain circumstances, those who examine the RCC could conclude that it is anywhere from a Christian church to a cult. He admits that three of the four main components of the RCC are ritual, hierarchy, and pagan teachings and practices. Yet Geisler, with his co-author Rhodes, affects outrage at similar statements by Witness Lee. Geisler's four points about the constituents of the RCC actually support Witness Lee's teaching about the woman who mixes leaven with the fine flour in Matthew 13:33. Yet Geisler and Rhodes attack Witness Lee for applying the language of this parable to the RCC, ignoring the many respected expositors through history who did the same.

Additionally, allies of Geisler and Rhodes— John Ankerberg, Harvest House Publishers, and other authors on the ATRI website—write and publish very harsh criticisms of the

RCC. In many cases, they say things that could be characterized as strong, harsh, and extremely offensive. Ankerberg flatly denies that the RCC is a Christian church or even a Christian religion and sees it as full of heresy and a hindrance to the gospel and the cause of Christ. He also associates the RCC with gross, demonic immoralities. Other authors on his website say, “the Catholic Church has . . . gone the way of the apostates,” “what Jesus rejected, the Roman Catholic Church has now restored,” “their insistence on such heresies places them at the top of the list of religious cults,” the RCC may be “the mother of all “Christian” cults,” and other such statements.

Harvest House has published many of the statements about the RCC made by Geisler, Rhodes, and Ankerberg, as well as others who post on ATRI’s site. They have additionally published *A Woman Rides the Beast* by Dave Hunt, a scathing, no-holds-barred attack on the RCC, and *Occult Invasion*, also by Hunt, a book that associates the RCC with many satanic evils.

Apparently, all of these criticisms are acceptable to Geisler and Rhodes. It is only when Witness Lee criticizes the RCC that they cry, “Slander! Religious libel!” These examples demonstrate the double standard applied to the teachings of Witness Lee and the local churches by Geisler and Rhodes.

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<sup>1</sup> Witness Lee, *The God-ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> The very same chapter, chosen from among thousands of chapters in hundreds of books by Witness Lee, was the subject of very similar attacks on the Harvest House Publishers corporate website. Geisler aided in the defense of a book published by Harvest House and authored by John Ankerberg and John Weldon, so he should have been aware of both Harvest House’s criticisms and of the following articles published on this site:

- “Harvest House Publishers, John Ankerberg, and John Weldon Campaign to Paint the Local Churches as Anti-Christian: Against Christians and Against the Faith,”
- “Harvest House Books Echo Our Criticism of Today’s Christianity,”
- “Harvest House’s Hypocrisy Concerning Our Criticism of Christianity,”
- “Harvest House Web Site Used to Scandalize Christian Readers with Out of Context Quotes of Our Writings about ‘Christianity,’” and
- “Misrepresentation in ECNR: False Allegations That We ‘Reject’ Christians and the Christian Faith.”

Geisler and Rhodes ignored these responses and simply strung together fragments of Witness Lee’s writing to create the desired impression in much the same way Harvest House did.

<sup>3</sup> The mere fact that Witness Lee made strong and critical statements about the RCC does not support Geisler and Rhodes’ contention of slander and libel. As is often stated, “Truth is an absolute defense against the charge of libel.” In other words, if statements are true, they are not slanderous or libelous. Since Geisler and Rhodes couched their criticism of Witness Lee with accusations of slander and libel, it was incumbent upon them to challenge the truth of his statements. This they did not do. Rather, “Response” consists of bare accusation and sensationalism.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed explanation of the mishandling of excerpted quotes, see: “Misrepresenting Witness Lee and Defending the Roman Catholic Church” on this site.

<sup>5</sup> This matter will be touched briefly in this article. For a more complete presentation, please refer to “Biblical Critiques of Christianity – Selected Bibliography and Biographical Notes on Sources Cited.”

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), p. 124.

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<sup>7</sup> Martin Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian,” *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), p. 268-269.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example: Martin Luther, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation” and “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), p. 124 among many other references; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 314-315; John Calvin, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, edited by J. K. S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 90-91; John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John, Volume I*, trans. by William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1981), John 8:43-45; John Knox, “The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women,” *Selected Writings of John Knox: Public Epistles, Treatises, and Expositions to the Year 1559* (Dallas, TX: Kevin Reed, Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1995) available at: [www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLS/firblast.htm](http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLS/firblast.htm); John Wesley, “Revelation 17,” *John Wesley’s Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*, available at <http://wes.biblecommenter.com/revelation/17.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Ron Rhodes, *The Culting of America* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1994), p. 221.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology, Vol. III* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 813, 817, 822, 832; John Owen, “Sermon XV. The chamber of imagery in the church of Rome laid open,” *The Sermons of John Owen*, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/sermons.ii.xv.ii.html>; Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1964), p. 459; C. H. Mackintosh, *The Mackintosh Treasury* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1976), p. 814; F. B. Meyer, *Great Verses through the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977), pp. 467-468; H.A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Revelation* (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1920, 1973), pp. 55-56, 57, 299, 305-306; Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Revelation: God’s Last Word*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971, 1982), pp. 324-35; John Nelson Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, Volume V: Colossians—The Revelation* (Kingston-on-Thames: Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, 1965), p. 412; W.A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation: Volume 4—Revelation 11 through 17* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962, 1980), pp. 182, 186; Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Devotional Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1964, 1975), pp. 769, 770, 771; and John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), pp. 245-246. See “Biblical Critiques of Christianity – Selected Bibliography and Biographical Notes on Sources Cited” on this site.

<sup>11</sup> Ron Rhodes, *The 10 Most Important Things You Can Say to a Catholic* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2002), p. 106. These same sentences appear in Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2000), p. 241.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ron Rhodes, *Find It Quick: Handbook on Cults & New Religions* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2005), pp. 182-186. cf. p. 278, Item 87, “Unbelievers Can Be Demon Possessed.”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>15</sup> See: “Misrepresenting Witness Lee and Defending the Roman Catholic Church” on this site. This article demonstrates that many respected Christian teachers held interpretations concerning certain key parables and prophecies similar to those expounded by Witness Lee.

<sup>16</sup> Norman Geisler, excerpted from *When Cultists Ask* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997). “Mary—Fully Human, or Nearly Divine?” [www.ankerberg.com/Articles/PDFArchives/theological-dictionary/TD4W1299.pdf](http://www.ankerberg.com/Articles/PDFArchives/theological-dictionary/TD4W1299.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Norman Geisler and Joshua M. Betancourt, *Is Rome the True Church? A Consideration of the Roman Catholic Claim* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), p. 180.

<sup>18</sup> Geisler’s equivocation concerning the RCC may be due to sympathies formed during his study at Loyola of Chicago, a Jesuit institution.

<sup>19</sup> Geisler and Betancourt, op. cit., p 181.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>21</sup> For examples see:

- Norman Geisler and Joshua M. Betancourt, *Is Rome the True Church? A Consideration of the Roman Catholic Claim* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008).
- Norman Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995).
- Norman Geisler, “Mary -- Fully Human or Nearly Divine?” Ankerberg Theological Research Institute, 1999 ([www.ankerberg.com/Articles/\\_PDFArchives/theological-dictionary/TD4W1299.pdf](http://www.ankerberg.com/Articles/_PDFArchives/theological-dictionary/TD4W1299.pdf)).
- Norman Geisler, “The Apocrypha: Parts 1—4,” Ankerberg Theological Research Institute, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Norman Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), critiques cooperative efforts between Catholics and Protestants and “addresses the issue of whether cooperation or conflict should characterize these unions” (p. 15). It contends that “. . . there is no hope for ecclesiastic union with Catholicism.” It contains criticism of the endorsers of the “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” (“ECT”) statement drafted by Charles Colson and Kent Hill (then President of Eastern Nazarene College), among others. Its evangelical participants and endorsers included Os Guinness, Richard Land, Richard Mouw, Mark Noll, Jesse Miranda, Pat Robertson, and Thomas Oden. Geisler’s book is also critical of Michael Horton and J. I. Packer for diluting statements originally made in a response to “ECT.”

<sup>23</sup> John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Protestants & Catholics: Do They Now Agree?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), p. 219.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>26</sup> John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Coming Darkness* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1993), pp. 196-197.

<sup>27</sup> As of June, 2010. See [www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/archives-rc.htm](http://www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/archives-rc.htm).

<sup>28</sup> Some of the article titles attributed to Ankerberg and Weldon in the Roman Catholicism Index of the ATRI site are: “Catholic and Occult View of Mary,” “What about Marian Apparitions?,” “What is the Unique Role of Mary in Roman Catholicism and Is It Biblical?,” “Is the Pope Infallible in Matters of Doctrine and Morals?,” and “A Catholic is a Catholic is a Catholic.”

<sup>29</sup> Gendron, Mike, “Roman Catholicism—Apostolic or Apostate?” (Chattanooga, TN: ATRI, Not Dated), p. 3. [www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/\\_PDFArchives/roman-catholicism/RC2W1199.pdf](http://www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/_PDFArchives/roman-catholicism/RC2W1199.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> James McCarthy, “Roman Catholic Authority” (Chattanooga, TN: ATRI, Not Dated), p. 2. [www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/\\_PDFArchives/roman-catholicism/RC1W0899.pdf](http://www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/_PDFArchives/roman-catholicism/RC1W0899.pdf). Adapted from McCarthy, James, *The Gospel According to Rome* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995).

<sup>31</sup> Greg Durel, “The Signs of a Cult” (Chattanooga, TN: ATRI, Not Dated), p. 2, [www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/\\_PDFArchives/roman-catholicism/RC4W0899.pdf](http://www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/_PDFArchives/roman-catholicism/RC4W0899.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Ironically, as Harvest House’s contract copy editor for Ankerberg and Weldon’s *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* attested, statements critical of the RCC were removed from that book in order to broaden its marketability.

<sup>33</sup> Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1994), back cover.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>36</sup> Dave Hunt, *Occult Invasion* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998), p. 407.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 411.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 415.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.