

The Church That Swallowed a Church

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Pope Benedict's aggressive move to garner the wayward Anglican daughter of the church back into Rome's fold advances the Vatican's strategy to dominate global Christianity. By [Ron Fraser](#) and [Richard Palmer](#)

"Protestantism will be absorbed into the 'mother' church—and totally abolished" (*Plain Truth*, October 1961). Herbert W. Armstrong—the founder of the *Trumpet's* predecessor, the *Plain Truth*—made that bold prediction 48 years ago. On Oct. 20, 2009, the Vatican unveiled plans to do just that.

In a press conference at the Vatican, Cardinal William Levada, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, announced that the Catholic Church would offer a free ticket to Rome for all Anglicans who choose to reject the policies of their liberalized hierarchy. He offered membership of the Church of Rome to those who choose to convert, with the historic concessions that they may keep their Anglican practices and that married clergy may be accepted as priests in a newly established Catholic/Anglican community.

The move was bold, as swift and as sudden as a blitzkrieg frontal attack. With it, Pope Benedict struck at Anglo-Saxon Protestantism's leading light, the Anglican Church, blindsiding a weakened and divided Anglican community.

"Rome has parked its tanks on the archbishop of Canterbury's lawn," proclaimed Britain's *Times* newspaper (Oct. 21, 2009).

"This is a mortal blow to Anglicanism which will inevitably lead to disestablishment as the church shrinks yet further and become[s] increasingly irrelevant," said the National Secular Society.

This brilliant attack—orchestrated by the pope himself—will leave the Church of England mortally wounded. The Catholic Church will now divide and conquer.

Mary's Dowry

There's a long-held tradition in traditional Catholic circles that England is "Mary's dowry." The tradition holds that the Godhead gave England to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as a gift in all perpetuity as the mother of the church. Based on that tradition, the Vatican has sought to reclaim the dowry since King Henry VIII severed the relationship between the church in England and the Church of Rome in 1536.

The whole ecumenical movement of the latter half of the 20th century has been stimulated by the Vatican seeking to garner its wayward Protestant daughters back into its fold. Chief of these daughters of Rome within Western Christendom is the Anglican Church.

In recent years, many Anglicans have been angered by their church's liberal stance on issues such as the ordination of female clergy and homosexual priests. Now, thanks to the pope's directive, they may flock to the Catholic Church.

John Broadhurst, bishop of Fulham and chairman of the group Forward in Faith, formed to oppose the ordination of women bishops, said that up to 1,000 clergymen in England alone could move to Catholicism. Entire parishes or dioceses could make the switch.

In fact, defections to Catholicism are already beginning.

The Traditional Anglican Communion (tac)—a group of around 400,000 conservative Anglican churches that broke away from the Anglican Communion in 1990 to protest the liberalism—announced that the process toward full unity with Rome "would begin at once." The primate of the Traditional Anglican Communion, Archbishop John Hepworth, declared, "We are profoundly moved by the generosity of ... Pope Benedict xvi. ... He has dedicated his pontificate to the cause of unity" (*Catholic World News*, Oct. 21, 2009). Before October was out, the English members of tac had voted to accept the pope's invitation.

Catholic Archbishop Joseph Augustine Di Noia of the Congregation for Divine Worship said that hundreds of Anglicans had expressed a desire to return to Catholicism, including 50 bishops. Colin Blakely, editor of the Church of England newspaper, said that "The Anglo-Catholics have been waiting for this for decades" (*Deutsche Welle*, Oct. 20, 2009).

Already in the UK more Catholics than Anglicans attend church services regularly. If many Anglican congregations were to switch, then Catholicism would become by far the most dominant religion in Britain.

The Vatican's attack will continue to create waves within Protestantism's ranks for months to come, not to mention the impact it will have on British politics and the Crown itself.

A Sneak Attack

Like any good offensive, this was a surprise attack. The Catholic Church deliberately kept its plan secret from the Church of England for as long as possible. Usually proposals like these are debated for months ahead of time, but Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, the most senior bishop in the Church of England, only found out about it two weeks before the announcement.

Reporting from Rome, Robert Moynihan observed unusual phenomena attached to what appeared to be a rushed announcement of this invitation to Anglicans by Pope Benedict: "But I must say that today's press conference was among the strangest I have ever attended at the Vatican," he wrote in *Inside the Vatican* magazine. "Why? Because many things either didn't make sense, or were not explained" (Oct. 20, 2009).

Among those things, Moynihan wrote, was "the strange haste to hold this press conference." Whereas the Vatican ordinarily gives a week's notice before a major press conference, "today's conference was announced via a cell phone text message from Press Director Father Federico Lombardi, sj, sent to journalists' cell phones at only 5 p.m. yesterday—just 18 hours before the event, less than one day." Such short notice for an announcement over a document—rather than an obvious emergency—raised several eyebrows among the press corps.

Moynihan noted another "oddity" that was quite intriguing: "[I]t seemed quite odd that the text of the document that the press conference was held to present was ... not presented!" Though it was announced, "no copies were given out, and so no one knows yet what it really will say because ... it isn't finished—even though officials as recently as yesterday evening thought that it would be finished for today!" Journalists were told that "some questions of canon law need still to be clarified," but given no further details.

In another break from general practice, the move was not handled by the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity and the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission as matters regarding the Anglican Church usually are. This time, the pope went above these groups' heads. Either out of frustration for lack of progress, or to prevent the Anglicans from discovering his plans, the pope entrusted the task of formulating the constitution to his old department, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

William Joseph Levada, current head of the Congregation, worked under Benedict back when he headed the body as Cardinal Ratzinger. When Ratzinger became pope, he personally appointed Levada to succeed him. So it seems Benedict wanted to commit the task of drawing up the new constitution to someone he could trust.

Let there be no doubt—this coup was directly orchestrated by the man at the head in the Vatican.

Place this remarkable event in the context of the biblical prophecy highlighted for years by Herbert Armstrong. This perspective reveals that the invitation to the Anglican Church is but one victory within a grand strategy.

Seven years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Mr. Armstrong reiterated what he'd maintained for years. In a letter to his supporters, he observed, "The uprising against Soviet domination in Poland can easily lead to Poland, and such Eastern European nations as Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and even Greece, joining in a union with Roman Catholic nations in Western Europe. The Eastern Orthodox Church could join with the Roman Catholic. The 10 nations of Revelation 17 will be Catholic" (May 20, 1982).

Those nations Herbert Armstrong referred to are already firmly embedded within the EU. Rome has now formally invited Anglicans to return to its bosom. Many Anglican communities are now preparing to return to the fold.

Watch now for Pope Benedict to move to the next stage of his ecumenical project: the drawing in of the *Orthodox community* to the realm of mother Rome.

A Return to Tradition

The Anglican community, tremendously weakened by the aggressive penetration of its ranks by rabid feminists, homosexuals and lesbians since the breakdown triggered by the social revolt of the 1960s, was always going to be easier meat for Vatican takeover than Rome's eastern daughters. The Vatican just had to take the moral high ground and hold it. The great pedophile purge within the priesthood has a lot to do with that strategy.

However, Benedict is working on another angle to woo the Orthodox, who split from Rome in 1054, back to Rome. The strength of tradition and ceremony attached to the Eastern Rite is something Benedict has been carefully playing to his ecumenical advantage.

Chiesa reported on October 20: "The ecumenism of Pope Ratzinger appears increasingly influenced by fidelity to tradition. That's the way it is with the Lefebvists"—that is, members of the Society of St. Pius x, a group of Catholic traditionalists. "And even more so with the Eastern Orthodox churches.

"And also attached to the grand tradition are the Orthodox churches which seem to be having more productive encounters with the current pontiff. From October 16-23 in Cyprus, the second round of dialogue—the first was in Ravenna, in 2007—is being held between Catholics and Orthodox on the question of papal primacy, in the light of how it was lived during the first millennium. Today, more than ever, with Joseph Ratzinger as pope, the ecumenical journey seems not a pursuit of modernity, but a return to the terrain of tradition."

That emphasis on tradition was underscored two days before the pope's dramatic ecumenical announcement. It was the kind of event St.

Peter's has not witnessed for over 40 years.

Again reporting on location, Robert Moynihan observed, "As rain fell in St. Peter's Square, a solemn high mass according to the old rite was celebrated this morning in Latin in St. Peter's Basilica It was the first time a solemn high mass according to the old rite has been celebrated in St. Peter's Basilica since 1969, 40 years ago." Moynihan noted that "Many low old rite masses have been celebrated in different chapels of the basilica ... especially in the past two years since the promulgation on July 7, 2007, of *Summorum Pontificum*, Pope Benedict's *motu proprio* calling for wider celebration of the old mass" (op. cit., Oct. 18, 2009).

The celebration of that historic mass—redolent with a symbolism connoting "a return to the terrain of tradition"—would not have been lost on either the Traditional Anglicans nor the Eastern Orthodox, timed as it was to set the scene for the pope's dramatic announcement two days later.

Then, at that press conference announcing the invitation to the Anglicans, came another clue as to the Vatican's intentions toward the Orthodox Church. Moynihan observed that the press conference had a "missing person": German Cardinal Walter Kasper, head of the Council for Christian Unity. He "has for many years been nominally in charge of the decades-long Catholic-Anglican dialogue," wrote Moynihan. "According to all usual protocol, Kasper should have been at this conference, but was not (he is in Cyprus for a few days carrying on a dialogue with the Orthodox)" (ibid., Oct. 20, 2009).

Note that detail. Did Benedict's seeming undue haste to make this announcement perhaps relate to why the German cardinal was in Cyprus? Was it timed to send a signal to the Eastern Orthodox hierarchy with whom Kasper was meeting that the pope is ready to make similar concessions to the Orthodox community if it capitulates to Rome? After all, Kasper was right on the spot to assess its reaction to this dramatic announcement; he could then report that reaction firsthand to Benedict upon his return to Rome. As it was, Kasper left Cyprus with both Orthodox and Roman representatives affirming the continuance of their ecumenical dialogue.

Look at the Context

This dramatic move by the Vatican is but the latest manifestation of powerful biblical prophecies destined for fulfillment in our time.

Herbert W. Armstrong often forecast that Rome would gather its daughter churches back into its fold immediately before Christ returned. The fact that Pope Benedict has made this move now—at this juncture in unfolding world events—places it in true prophetic perspective. Consider its timing relative to several other recent events:

- the ongoing failure of the global financial system
- the consolidation of the EU power bloc under the Lisbon Treaty/European Constitution
- the proposed imposition of global financial and economic regulation by the EU
- the moves to establish a pan-European military force under Germanic leadership
- the rapidly aggressive rise of Islamic power via Iran, a prospective nuclear power
- the German-Russian nexus replacing the Atlantic alliance
- the latest move of East Asian powers to coalesce in an EU-type community
- an appeasing, increasingly isolationist U.S. presidency

Viewed in this context, Pope Benedict's shock move to garner Rome's wayward daughters back into the Vatican's fold is but one more massive sign of the times—the biblical "times of the gentiles" prophesied to immediately precede the return of Jesus Christ to rule this Earth (Luke 21:24).

The precision and accuracy of Mr. Armstrong's analyses continue to fit the facts of present-day reality. Much of what he prophesied has, since his death 24 years ago, been fulfilled and since become part of unfolding history. It is because of that tremendous foundation of Bible prophecy, built by Christ in over half a century of working through the ministry of Herbert Armstrong, that we are able to bring to you each month—and even *daily*, via theTrumpet.com—clear and concise proof of just where this world is headed, and predict events of the immediate future before they happen. One such event we have continually pointed to is the imminence of the Vatican's move to gather back to Rome its Protestant and Orthodox daughters.

"The final—albeit short-lived—triumph of Catholicism is recorded in literally dozens of Bible prophecies," said the November 1963 *Plain Truth*. "Right now—whether we want to believe it or not—the stage is being set for the greatest revolution in religion the world has witnessed The mighty problem of achieving unity is two-fold. First, it involves reconciliation of the Orthodox Schism that officially commenced in 1054 and divided the churches in the East Second, it involves restoration to the Roman Communion all Protestantism which developed from 1517 onward."

For now, the Catholic Church is willing to compromise to draw in Anglicans. But that won't always be so. As *Trumpet* editor in chief [Gerald Flurry](#) wrote in May 2007, "Indeed, biblical prophecy indicates that full unity will not be achieved purely voluntarily. At a certain point, the mother church will abandon its efforts to woo her daughters back by flatteries and instead revert to the age-old method of preserving 'Christian' unity by exerting physical force."

Now you are watching this prophecy being fulfilled before your eyes. The Catholics are gathering in whomever they can. They are content to

use diplomacy at present—but soon the force will come. •

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