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TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER

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Dedicated to
the memory of
Jerome R. Dollard, O.S.B.
and
John E. Steely

Introduction

The Roman Catholic Church has approximately eight hundred million members worldwide, making it larger than any other organization on earth, larger even than any nation except China. In the United States, the Catholic Church has approximately fifty-three million members, just under twenty-five percent of the population.

The Southern Baptist Convention has approximately fifteen million members in thirty-seven thousand churches scattered across the fifty states of the United States. The Roman Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist Convention are the two largest denominations in the United States. The story of their relationships is complex.

In 1978, a new chapter in that story was begun. Scholars from the two communions began to meet twice a year for conversations. The purpose of these conversations, as of all conversations, was to get to know each other better and to come to appreciate each other more fully. Through openness, thoughtfulness, and honesty in the conversations, that purpose has been achieved.

The book which you hold in your hand is the product of that Roman Catholic/Southern Baptist Scholars' Dialogue. Our purpose in writing it is identical to our purpose in meeting. We hope that, as Baptists and Catholics read and study this book, you will come to know each other better and to appreciate each other more fully. In this book, we hope to share with you some of the results of our work over a ten year period.

The book has four major parts. In the first part you will find two very personal testimonies, one by a Catholic bishop about Southern Baptists, the other by a Baptist professor of missions about Roman Catholics. Bishop James Niedergeses of Nashville and Professor Alan Neely of Princeton wrote their testimonies for this book.

The second part of the book comprises seven articles about Christian faith and life. The authorship of these articles is very involved. All seven articles originated in papers which were read and discussed at the Scholars' Dialogue; some of those papers

have been published in the *Review and Expositor* (Spring 1982) and in the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* (Spring 1986), and those, together with some unpublished papers, were summarized by the Rev. Jude Wiesenbeck, S.D.S., who is the Ecumenical Officer for the Diocese of Nashville. Those papers and summaries then became the raw materials for the finished products which you now have, and whose authors we want now to introduce. Dr. J. William Angell is Easley Professor of Religion at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Sister Mary Aquin O'Neill, RSM, is Visiting Associate Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame and Undergraduate Program Coordinator at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute near Jerusalem. The Rev. Joe Witmer is Pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Aurora, Ohio; he was formerly on the staff of the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. Dr. Eljee Bentley is the Archivist for the Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention in Birmingham, Alabama. Dr. Fisher Humphreys is Professor of Theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The Rev. Frederick M. Jelly, O.P., is Professor of Theology at Mount St. Mary's Seminary at Emmitsburg, Maryland. Dr. James Leo Garrett, Jr., is Professor of Historical Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. The Rev. Donald Senior, C.P., is Professor of New Testament and President of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Mr. Donald R. Kammerdiener is Vice President for the Americas for the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention at Richmond, Virginia. Sister Rita Forbes, M.M., is Personnel Director of the Maryknoll Sisters in Maryknoll, New York. The Rev. Thomas F. Stransky, C.S.P., is Rector of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute near Jerusalem. The Rev. Gerard Austin, O.P., is Professor of Theology and Liturgics at the Catholic University of America at Washington, D.C. Dr. E. Glenn Hinson is David T. Porter Professor of Church History at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. The Rev. Robert A. Dalton is a Glenmary Home Missioner whose principal responsibility is to act as a liason between Catholics and Southern Baptists. Dr. C. Brownlow Hastings was formerly Assistant Director of the De-

partment of Interfaith Witness at the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta.

The third part of the book is about Baptists and Catholics talking to each other, and it comprises four chapters. The first is a summary of the agreements and differences between Catholics and Baptists as we see them after ten years of conversations; it is a synopsis of the issues we have discussed, and it is the work of all the participants in the Baptist/Catholic Scholars' Dialogue. The working draft of this chapter was prepared by Dr. James Leo Garrett and by the Rev. John Donahue, S.J., who is Professor of New Testament at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, California. Next comes a brief history of our conversations, including a list of all the participants, by Dr. C. Brownlow Hastings; Dr. Hastings's article is based on an earlier article by Dr. William L. Hendricks, Professor of Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Then Sister Mary Aquin O'Neill, RSM, has provided an explanation of how ecumenical conversation takes place not only at the level of our rational minds but also in our hearts. Finally, Dr. C. Brownlow Hastings and the Rev. Thaddeus Daniel Horgan, SA, who is a staff member for the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, provide very practical suggestions about how to have successful ecumenical events either in local congregations or involving several churches in a geographical area.

The fourth part includes a study guide for this book, by the editors; a brief annotated bibliography; and a glossary of terms which was principally the work of the Rev. Jude Wiesenbeck, S.D.S., with suggestions from several other members of the Scholars' Dialogue.

We have dedicated this volume to the memory of two beloved and respected colleagues who died before work on this volume was completed. They were the Rev. Jerry Dollard, O.S.B., who died in a car accident in 1985, and Dr. John E. Steely, who died of a heart attack on Good Friday, 1986.

We also want to express our gratitude to Mrs. Cheryl Dingus, whose splendid secretarial and editorial work has contributed significantly to the quality of this book.

Those who participated in the conversations which took place over ten years feel very deeply that our wonderful God has blessed our work on behalf of better mutual understanding. It is our hope, and our prayer, that as you read this book, you too will come to a better understanding, and that this may contribute to the carrying out of that for which our Lord Jesus prayed: “I pray that they may all be one. Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe” (John 17:21, TEV).

Fisher Humphreys and Mary Aquin O’Neill, RSM, editors