

BIBLICAL CHALLENGES FROM ECUMENISTS

The growing trends in Ecumenism *between* churches and New Evangelicalism *within* churches are being justified by a myriad of proof texts. These are mesmerizing pastors and laity who simply don't think. Lifted out of context, they are rapidly moving the Protestant world away from its distinctiveness. A spin-off of this is growing tolerance to a serious misunderstanding of love. In the name of love we don't question anyone's behavior ultimately, we don't question sin. Permissiveness is the outcome. The uniqueness of Biblical Christianity loses its luster at the altar of compromise.

Here are a few texts that the Christian world throws around in its feeble attempt to justify developing allies with apostasy.

That they may be one

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou has sent me" (John 17:21).

This text was popularized by Pope John Paul II in May of 1995 when he released an encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint – That They May Be One*. Within that document is a technique (subsequently, adopted by Protestants) of projecting guilt on all who don't desire what Christ desires – unity of believers into one body.

This has become the theme song of ecumenism. Its isolated phrase projects lovism, avoiding the context in which Jesus gave it. Unity is based on *saving truth*. It is based on the beautiful paradigm of the bonding of the Father and the Son. That is the basis for an appreciation of unity.

Jesus prayed that His people would be kept from evil (vs 15) and that they would be made holy through truth (vss 1, 19). He noted His followers were obedient to God's word (vs 6). As the result of this, they were not of the world (vs 4).

What a vast contrast to the superficial brotherhood that is promulgated by the apostate Christian churches. Many claim it is simply the truth that is in Jesus. Jesus noted early in this prayer that His people have "kept thy [Father's] word" (vs 6), which is the word "which thou [the Father] gavest me [Jesus]" (vs 8). He then prays for those yet to receive His words through His followers (vs 20).

Unity is based on Jesus and *all* that He stands for. Unity doesn't stand alone.

Forbid them not

And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part" (Mark 9:38-40).

This is used not only to justify Christian unity but to shun addressing any error by church leaders. If that is what Jesus meant, He would be at variance with His own instruction given through the apostles: *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed"* (Galatians 1:8-9).

Colossians 2:8: *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."*

II Thessalonians 3:14: *"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."*

II Timothy 2:19: *"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."*

I John 4:1: *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."*

II John 1:9-10: *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."*

When noting these verses together, clearly, error must be identified, exposed and isolated.

This instruction from Christ goes even deeper, addressing the very nature of our mission.

"None who showed themselves in any way friendly to Christ were to be repulsed. The disciples must not indulge a narrow, exclusive spirit, but must manifest the same far-reaching sympathy which they had seen in their Master. James and John had thought that in checking this man they had in view the Lords honor; but they began to see that they were jealous for their own. They acknowledged their error and accepted the reproof."^[1]

God has not given authority to any leader *over* mankind. If authority is expressing error, that might have to be pointed out, but they are not forbidden from serving Christ. They are not to be suppressed by force.

Love one another

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

This verse has had a profound influence on ecumenical thinking more than any other. It is used to teach: Let us forget labels, unite and anything less than sharing Christ's love is arrogance and isolationism.

Long forgotten, even by Catholics, is the concept that love is a principle. That was one of their mantras in Marriage Encounter. It steps out of the circle of the warm and fuzzy. Godly love is tied to Godliness. Only in that context can true Christian fellowship occur. Only within the boundaries of heaven can unity commence. John, the beloved disciple, knew the depth of that love.

"John's affection for his Master was not the cause of Christ's love for him, but the effect of that love. John desired to become like Jesus, and under the transforming influence of the love of Christ he did become meek and lowly. Self was hid in Jesus. Above all his companions, John yielded himself to the power of that wondrous life. He says, The life was manifested, and we have seen it. And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." 1 John 1:2; John 1:16. John knew the Saviour by an experimental knowledge. His Master's lessons were graven on his soul. When he testified of the Saviour's grace, his simple language was eloquent with the love that pervaded his whole being....

"Behold, he said, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.... Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:1, 2."^[2]

Yet, with pathos he noted: "For *this is* the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3).

He was picking up Jesus words as a refrain: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him) (John 14:23).

The ecumenical appeal to be one, unite and love one another is given at the expense of the greatest commandment, love to God. The ecumenical theme must begin there – but it doesn't.

What does it mean to love God with all our heart, soul and mind, *then* our neighbor (Matthew 22:35-38)? Everything has been backwards and spiritually void. Simply Love your neighbor in the name of Jesus destroys the great metaphor of love. It all starts with a unique relationship with Him.

This does not detract from our loving ministry to others. But that ministry and outreach never compromises. It never embraces falsehood nor complements error. Nor does it ever condone sin.

One of the greatest messages that Jesus warned us about in an end-time setting was deception (Matthew 24:4). Then repeatedly He cautioned against those who would represent Him (Christ) but were teaching error. Everything must be done within the parameters of truth. Then He asked a question: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant?" Matthew 24:45.

This theme draws on Romans 16:17-18a: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ."

Though used by ecumenists to promote unity, scholars clearly show that it means avoiding those who would divide God's people with false doctrines.

Conclusion

The premise of unity is distinctly Biblical, ecumenism is not. There are two distinct bodies who call themselves *Christian* at the end of time. One is referred to as a pure woman, its members gently noted as the remnant (Revelation 12:1, 17). The other is the harlot (Revelation 17) whose members are noted as whoever worships the beast. The harlot is tied to the false trinity dragon, the beast and the false prophet (spiritualism the papacy and apostate Protestantism) together they are called Babylon. The remnant are asked to call people out of Babylon (Revelation 18:1-2) as the final invitation to repent in the history of this world. Babylon images much of the ecumenical trends we are witnessing today.

Phrases are being lifted out of Biblical context and transformed into mantras of common good. They blaspheme the intent for which God has given these Scriptures.

How can one determine which body of believers is the pure woman or the harlot? It states with exactness: the saints, the remnant, keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. One doesn't exist without the other (12:17, 14:12). That means all unity must be based on what we have already discovered – truth and love based on honor and obedience to that truth. All are invited to come out and be a part of. But God's people, whom others are invited to be part of, always represent Jesus *and* all that He stands for.

Unity of believers can mean anything. Unity of believers in truth and in following Jesus *all the way* means everything.

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EndTime Issues..., October 2003

References:

[1] *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 544.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 544-545.