

ECUMENISM – NO TURNING BACK NOW!

A FORCE THAT NOW CAN'T BE STOPPED

Protestant churches, faced with the challenge to either be ever more articulate with the Gospel truth or relax its meaning to draw an ever widening base of followers, are succumbing to the latter. When a truth driven church is zealous for the cross of Jesus Christ, eternal issues are paramount. When a social driven church is active, temporal needs take precedence. Neither are mutually exclusive, but the latter has such an ever widening appeal that a saving relationship with Christ has degraded to a simple humanistic assent. Paul saw that happening in Rome and wrote:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” Romans 10:1-3.

At the heart of the accelerating ecumenical movement is an often repeated theme: “We must forget our differences and join together over our mutual concerns.” What concerns? Cultural trends against traditional Christian values. In light of increasing sensitivity that the end is near among evangelicals, the urgency to cooperate and relax the gospel standards has broad appeal. Paul also condemned forcefully those who promote the ideology “Let us do evil, that good may come.” Romans 3:8.

The litmus test has become *tolerance*, seeing how close we can really come to each other in spite of differences. It has become a competitive sport, an “interdenominational game.” Concomitant with this is the promotion of an ever widening number of social and psychological programs within churches, religious superficiality with lessening emphasis on spiritual growth help drive the ecumenical movement.

Great resistance to Catholicism existed within Protestant ranks ever since the seeds of the Reformation grew. In 1910 an early missionary conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, that led to the organization of the World Council of Churches (WCC) refused to admit countries that were predominantly Roman Catholic. By the year 2000 most evangelicals and many mainstream Protestants considered Roman Catholics as partners in evangelism.[1]

Well known religious leaders have become outspoken promoters of compromise and unity which include Jack Hayford, Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, Paul and Jan Crouch, Luis Palau and Bill Bright. By 1989 the WCC announced at its World Conference that religious leaders from Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism had joined them as “consultants.” By 1994 broad endorsement of agendas for a *global spirituality* began coming from the United Nations, Multnomah School of the Bible, National Religious Broadcasters Association, World Christian Encyclopedia, the United Methodist Church and the Vatican.[2]

During the decade of the 1990’s major crusades for Christ and evangelism congresses were conducted by Protestants. Many had Catholic leaders as key speakers. During that decade the Vatican conducted a sinister campaign against *fundamentalism*. The Catholic Church made

clear it wasn't against "mainline" Protestant churches but against *literalism* of some fundamentalist groups in their interpretation of biblical passages.

Paralleling this an increasingly false notion was promoted that doctrinal issues must be separated from one's confidence in God. Jesus is to be an emotional idol without intellectual content. This led to less emphasis on the truth about Jesus and more on belief in Him. The promotional theme became experience Him as opposed to knowing Him.

Paul was alarmed in his day over such issues and warned:

"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."
Romans 10:1-2.

Today, the Protestant world is being trapped by the false assumption that ecumenism is the rallying cry for spiritual needs. As church leaders have less to say about genuine conversion and repentance, the move to unify and cooperate has become a *religious* theme in itself. In many circles it is close to *heresy* if one fails to promote unity and reduce the elements of faith to a few common points. For the sake of love put aside differences.

Though not admitting or even understanding where ecumenism is headed, it is leading towards one altar, one worship and one leader. The strongest element in this movement is the most silent – the Vatican. As voices (the United Nations and Atheism) of concern are raised against a One World Order, the Roman Curia has appointed two cardinals to spearhead unity – of the "separated brethren" back to Rome.

As the *urgency* towards religious unity progresses, the unwieldy World Council of Churches is losing its grasp on *leadership* strategies. The World Evangelical Association (WEA) is gaining enormous strength in politics over religious liberty issues and articulating churches' responsibility over social issues. As the WEA gains a more flexible view of religious globalization, their evangelical witness has developed into a cultural and political agent with less personal faithfulness to Jesus Christ.[3]

Working with other churches over common social objectives with highly publicized dialogue and cautious diplomacy over differences has become the new Christian mantra. The Roman Catholic Pontifical Council now recognizes the WEA as a "dialogue" partner.

A working group of Catholics, evangelical and diverse Protestant groups laid groundwork in 2002 to develop definitive ways to unite. Calling itself *Christian Churches Together*, it met formally in January of this year and was chaired by John Busby, Commissioner of The Salvation Army. They met at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, calling itself the CCTUSA. It is set to be a steering group to draw not only churches together but groups such as the National Council of Churches and WEA. World Vision was represented and promised to be a unifying force.

As these ecumenical moves by the Protestant world gain momentum, the Catholic world is conveying ominous deceptions. Addressing themes currently in support of unity, they are filled

with subliminal projections of guilt towards those disinterested. Their stigma laden concepts include:

1. Belief in the Trinity is the “model” and command for Christian unity
2. Only by various religions working together can the world’s problems be solved
3. God is in love with everyone, so we must be in love with each others churches
4. Reconciliation is a Christian principle among the denominations
5. And – the most sinister of all (which will be addressed in the next *EndTime Issues...* e-magazine), Christ wants us to *evangelize* not *proselytize*.

Protestants have become the catalyst reaching across the gulf to grasp hands with other religions, especially Catholicism. This now represents an unstoppable force because now it has been given a moral image.

Gallup Poll Reveals Trends in Religion

George Gallup, chairman of the George H. Gallup International Institute, and D. Michael Lindsay, speaker and consultant to the Institute for Religion and Culture, explore the state of churches today in the book, *The Gallup Guide: Reality Check for 21st Century Churches* (Group Publishing: 2002).

Church leaders – depending on their perspective and outlook – are sure to view the following statements from Gallup and Lindsay as depressing, encouraging or challenging:

Americans are experiencing an intense search and hunger for the spiritual and an unprecedented desire for religious and spiritual growth.

- Many Americans seem not to know what they believe or why.
- Religious faith is broad but not deep, with many Americans holding strong beliefs but see little impact that religious faith has on individual lives and society.
- God is popular but is not first in many people’s lives.... The authors found that: ‘Americans ... are practicing a do-it-yourself, whatever-works kind of religion, picking and choosing among beliefs and practices of various faith traditions.’ ... the challenges to churches in their efforts to bring the populace to a deeper, more informed and committed level of spirituality or religious faith are indeed formidable. Yet, in the present climate, the opportunities to do so seem unparalleled.” *Sunday Magazine*; Summer, 2003.

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References:

- [1] Reynolds, M. H.; A.D. *2000 Ecumenical Evangelism – A Warning*, Foundation.
- [2] www.fundamentalbiblechurch.org/foundation/fbcad200.htm.
- [3] Oden, Thomas; “Whither Christian Unity,” *Christianity Today*, 9/2000.