



Penticton Free Presbyterian Church—Online article archive

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT — WHAT IT REALLY IS!

A brief outline of the nature of the Ecumenical movement and what the Christian's response to it should be.

The term ecumenical is derived from a Greek word that means "earth" or "world". The term simply indicates that the intention of those who are engaged in ecumenical activity is to build one world-wide Church. The ecumenical movement is a movement that has Church unity as its goal.

The twentieth century has seen great advances in this direction. The establishment of the *World Council of Churches* in 1948 was a quantum leap toward church unity. Since then there has been a steady increase in ecumenical activity both in a national and international sense. In recent times the evidence of the progressive strides that ecumenism has made is alarming. For example, the sixty four Lutheran denominations around the world are on the verge of accepting a joint statement with the Roman Catholic Church on the doctrine of Justification. When we think that Luther, the man from who this Church derives its name, broke from Roman Catholicism over this very issue, we see that the ecumenical movement is perilously close to success. The production of joint statements in 1994 and again in 1997 by *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* further shows how successful this movement has been. This group includes high ranking 'evangelicals' from the North American religious scene led by Charles Colson. The joint statement was then endorsed by other evangelicals including J. I. Packer and Bill Bright. Evangelical leaders like Dr Billy Graham are in the forefront of this ecumenical drive for religious unity and promote numerous inter-church activities. These are men that vast numbers of Christians listen to, support and follow. Many are carried along on this tide of ecumenism without understanding what it is and where it will take them. Ignorance has always been the Devil's chief weapon in his destructive attacks on the cause of Jesus Christ. It is necessary that every one who is truly born of God examine the ecumenical movement in the light of Scripture, not in the light of popular opinion and obey what God has to say about it.

Roman Catholicism and the Ecumenical Movement.

It has long been the goal of the Roman Catholic Church to bring the "separated brethren" in the Protestant denominations back into fellowship with itself and so undo the work of the great Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. As part of the Second Vatican Council a Decree on Ecumenism was issued by Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964. This decree is the authoritative statement of the Roman Catholic Church on ecumenical activity and on her involvement in it.

In this decree it is made abundantly clear that all ecumenical activity that the Roman Catholic Church endorses and participates in is designed solely to promote reunion with Rome. The Roman Catholic Church claims that she is the true Church and that nothing can ever change that fact. All who have ever separated from her are therefore in error and her-



Penticton Free Presbyterian Church—Online article archive

esy. Roman Catholic doctrine insists that in order for church union to take place and the ecumenical goal of one world church to be reached there must be a return to the Roman Catholic fold. This teaching is clearly stated in the *Decree on Ecumenism*:—

"...it is only through Christ's Catholic Church, which is 'the all-embracing means of salvation,' that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation. We believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, in order to establish the one Body of Christ on earth to which all should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God." (Paragraph 3)

"...when the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion have been gradually overcome, all Christians will at last, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, be gathered into the one and only Church in that unity which Christ bestowed on His Church from the beginning. We believe that this unity subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose..." (Paragraph 4)

From this it will be very obvious that when ecumenism has the support of the Roman Catholic Church its direction is back to Rome and back to the Mass. The one Church envisaged by the ecumenists is a Roman Catholic Church. The use of deceitful words by modern clerics cannot hide the fact that the official position of the Roman Catholic Church is that this is the direction ecumenical activity must take — back to the shackles of Papal darkness and superstition that the Reformation threw off.

The Charismatic Connection.

Ecumenism requires the help of numerous participants. One key participant in the march back to Rome is the Charismatic movement. This movement has an important role to play since it is very largely non-denominational and so very easily becomes interdenominational. The charismatic movement has always emphasized personal feeling and experience above the written doctrines of Scripture. This has made it a very useful tool in the hand of the Devil. When the written doctrines of God's Word are departed from or weakened error creeps in undetected — indeed error is welcomed by those ignorant of truth! The cardinal Scriptural doctrines of sin, justification and the once for all redeeming work of Christ became less important than the "charismatic experience" and so they were largely set aside and ignored. When the charismatic movement began to make inroads into the Roman Catholic Church the door was opened wide for a return to Rome. Those who believed in the charismatic experience could not avoid the conclusion that their fellow charismatics in the Catholic Church were motivated by the same spirit. Even though Charismatic Roman-Catholics openly claimed that their charismatic experience made them better Roman Catholics there was no logical reason for continued separation because their charismatic experience was identical. In recent times the emergence of groups such as Promise Keepers has proved again that the Charismatic movement is a Rome-ward movement. Promise Keepers is an interdenominational organization that openly promotes Roman Catholicism and has made Church unity a priority.

The Neo-evangelical Factor.



Penticton Free Presbyterian Church—Online article archive

There are many involved in the ecumenical movement who claim to be "evangelical". The term "evangelical" is derived from the Greek word translated "Gospel" in the New Testament. An evangelical therefore is someone who preaches and believes the gospel of the Bible. Those in the ecumenical movement who claim to be evangelical are deceivers because they no longer believe or preach the gospel as it is recorded in Scripture. They have departed from the faith and although they may still use Biblical terminology in reality they preach another gospel. Many of the populist preachers of our day fall into this category. Dr Billy Graham is a case in point and there are many following in his wake who have abandoned the truths of God's Word for a popular message that has no sin, no guilt, no Hell and no salvation in it. These modernists have openly embraced Roman Catholicism and are leading their followers back to union with Rome. Dr Graham is on record eulogizing the Pope as the greatest Christian on earth. His crusades have for many years involved Roman Catholic priests as counselors and he has encouraged his Roman Catholic "converts" to return to their Church. Such cooperation with Roman Catholicism by those who profess to be evangelical has done much to advance the ecumenical march back to Roman darkness.

What does God say?

God in His Word condemns any teaching that is not consistent with Scripture — *to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them* (Isaiah 8:20). It is our solemn responsibility to examine all spiritual teaching by the Word of God. If what is said does not agree with Scripture it is to be rejected as false. It is for this reason that we must utterly reject the Church of Rome's claim to be a Christian Church. That claim is nullified by Rome's adherence to, the Mass as a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ; the unscriptural veneration of Mary and the saints; the promotion of Mary as a mediatrix between sinners and God; the erasing of original sin in baptism; and a multitude of other unscriptural teachings.

The whole direction of the ecumenical movement towards Rome is therefore wrong. Those involved are seeking union with a Church that God has cursed because of its error—*If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed* (Galatians 1:9). Ecumenical activity is manifestly wrong because it requires the abandoning Scriptural truth in order to facilitate progress towards union with Rome.

The call of God to His children is unmistakably clear — *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. (II Corinthians 6:14-17) And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them* (Ephesians 5:11)

The objection may well be raised, Does God not promote unity? John 17:21, where Christ



Penticton Free Presbyterian Church—Online article archive

prays *that they all may be one*, is often cited as a Scriptural mandate for ecumenism and Church unity. God in His Word calls for the unity of His people with Himself around the standard of revealed truth. Scriptural unity is unity on the unshakable foundation of Divine truth in Scripture not on the basis of error and false teaching that modern Church unity is founded upon.

God calls His people to separate and to resist the wicked trends of today. It is always easier to go with the crowd and therefore resistance to popular ecumenical activity carries a price. It will mean unpopularity; it will mean shame and the scorn of the crowd. Faithfulness to God, however, always means, the well done of God. Which will it be for you? The reward of popularity here on earth or the well done of God? John 12:42-43 records that *among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* Let us not follow this cowardly and shameful example in our day when an uncompromising stand for God is unquestionably called for!