

HISTORY OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The initial stages or early development of the modern Ecumenical Movement can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century with the formation of the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) in 1908 which was composed of various denominations concerned with social issues.¹ The FCC merged with other ecumenical churches in 1910 to form the National Council of Churches (NCC), which although not officially recognized as part of the World Council of Churches, nevertheless has functioned in close collaboration with the WCC over the years.

However, the World Missionary Conference of 1910, held in Edinburgh, Scotland is widely seen as the formal beginning of the Ecumenical Movement, because that conference resulted in the formation of two important ecumenical councils: the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1921, and the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948. In 1961 the IMC merged with the WCC becoming the WCC's Division of World Mission and Evangelism.

The focus of the ecumenical movement from its early stages until the present time has been to resolve racial, economic, and social injustice, and to develop world-wide religious pluralism, meaning the acceptance and admission that all religious worldviews are equally valid and present multiple paths to God.²

RELATIONSHIPS OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The ecumenical movement has ties to numerous groups and organizations. The purpose of this paper is to examine some of these ties and demonstrate why believers might want to question these associations.

1. THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT IN RELATION TO THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

It has been stated that the “goal of the modern ecumenical movement is the building of a vast worldwide super-church — ‘one church for one world’... Dr. G. Bromley Oxnam is credited with having prepared the blueprints for both the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. He thoroughly understood the role they would play in achieving his dream of ‘The Coming Great Church’... In his book, *On the Rock*, this late great ecumenicist bypassed all the basic tenets of evangelical Christian doctrine and called for the abandonment of all traditional and organizational barriers to church union... [He dreamed of the time when] it will be possible ‘to kneel before a common altar (with the Roman Catholic Church), beg forgiveness of the Christ for disunity, and sharing in the Bread and Wine of Holy Communion, rise in His Spirit to form the Holy Catholic Church to which all Christians may belong.’”³ The World Council of Churches goal has always been

¹ These denominations included Anglican, Baptist, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Methodist, Moravian, Oriental Orthodox, Polish National Catholic, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Council_of_Churches

² See the position paper on Religious Pluralism.

³ James DeForest Murch — with Clyde Taylor, John Walvoord, and John Paton, *The Coming World Church*, 1963, 16.

“to be united in the one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic church.”⁴

It is probably correct to say that “The ecumenical church is a child of the missionary movement.”⁵ By the latter part of the 19th century most missions “agreed on recognizing each other as valid branches of the one Church of Christ...”⁶ In 1888 plans had been laid out for “an Ecumenical Council of a new order... a ‘World’s Missionary Council.’”⁷ By 1910 a World Missionary Conference was held which led to the International Missionary Conference of 1928 which promoted liberalism, a social gospel, syncretism and “bringing in the Kingdom.” The 1910 World Missionary Conference inspired both The Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work and The World Conference on Faith and Order. These two conferences merged in 1938 when plans were also made for a World Council of Churches.⁸

Their cry was: “God wills unity... However we may justify the beginnings of disunion, we lament its continuance... Already the mission field is impatiently revolting from the divisions of the Western Church...”⁹ Any move back to a “one world church” understandably necessitates theological compromise. That’s why a pre-conference decision was made before the 1910 World Missionary Conference, that “no expression of opinion should be sought from the conference on any matter involving any ecclesiastical or doctrinal questions on which those taking part in the Conference differed among themselves.”¹⁰ Eventually the “basis” for World Council of Churches doctrinal unity was stated as accepting “our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior.” But also stated was this: “The Council desires to be a fellowship of those churches which accept these truths — the Incarnation and the Atonement. But it does not concern itself with the manner in which these churches interpret them.”¹¹ On this basis probably any so called “Christian” church could join the World Council of Churches.

The past decades have confirmed the World Council of Churches pursuit of their goal through theological compromise. In 1961 International Missionary Conference became the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, and the communist-backed Russian Orthodox Church joined the World Council of Churches. “Of the World Council of Churches’ present 337 member churches, 21 are Orthodox, numerically representing over one-third of the Christians belonging to World Council of Churches member churches. The Russian Orthodox Church is the World Council of Churches’ largest member church.”¹² And the “Roman Catholic Church... has become a full member of many national ecumenical bodies and of several regional ecumenical organizations and maintains

⁴ From *Ecumenical Review*, World Council of Churches, April 1974. Cited in Edward Panosian, *The World Council of Churches*, 1983, 23.

⁵ Dr. John A. Mackay of Princeton Seminary as quoted in Panosian, *The World Council of Churches*, 30.

⁶ Pierce Beaver, “The History of Mission Strategy,” *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 3rd. ed., 1999, 250-251.

⁷ A.T. Pierson / James Sherwood, *Missionary Review*, Jan. 1888, 48-49, Cited in Todd Johnson, “The Crisis of Missions,” *Mission Frontiers*, “Toward 2000, Special Supplement,” Aug., 1988.

⁸ For a sketch of these developments see Panosian, *The World Council of Churches*, 15-26 and Beaver, “The History of Mission Strategy,” *Perspectives...*, 248-251.

⁹ From the 1927 Faith and Order Conference document, “The Call to Unity.”

¹⁰ Panosian, *Ibid.*, 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

¹² www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/99/42pre.html

regular working relationships with the World Council of Churches especially through official membership of the Commission on Faith and Order.”¹³

The ecumenical stance of the World Council of Churches is based on theological liberalism and compromise. The ecumenical movement basis for unity is *love* or *service*, not *doctrine*. The former unites, the latter divides. When Jesus prayed “that they all may become one” (John 17:21), He most surely had true believers in mind. He was praying for a unity based on Truth. (See also 2nd John). The Scriptures are clear that we are not to be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14). According to biblical prophecy, a day is coming when there will be “one apostate world church” of unbelievers. And it appears that programs within the ecumenical movement of our times are moving churches in this direction. Bible believing Christians should be concerned with the World Council of Churches and its ecumenical pursuits.

2. THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT IN RELATION TO ROMAN CATHOLICISM

The “ecumenical” term, *oikoumene* meaning “worldwide,” has been used throughout church history, especially since the first “ecumenical” Council of Nicea in 325 AD. The Roman Catholic Church recognizes 21 such ecumenical councils since they claim to be “the sole Church of Christ... the one Body of Christ.”¹⁴ The last ecumenical council, Vatican II (1962-65), deliberately played a significant role in the ecumenical movement with the goal of winning back their Protestant “separated brethren” to the “one fold... united under one shepherd [the Roman Pope].”

At the outset of Vatican II, Pope John XXIII prayed for us Protestants: “We pray to you again for the lambs who are no longer part of the one fold of Jesus Christ, that they, too, who still glory in the name of Christians, may at last be united under one shepherd.”¹⁵ At the conclusion of the Council, Pope Paul VI said, “The first fruit of the Council is the conviction that the great problem of the reintegration within the one visible Church of all those who have the blessing and responsibility of calling themselves Christians must now, without delay, be given the closest attention.”¹⁶ In the “Decree of Ecumenism” the Council declared, “The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council.”¹⁷ And Pope John Paul II, addressing the World Council of Churches in Geneva, said, “From the beginning of my ministry as bishop of Rome, I have insisted that the engagement of the Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement is irreversible.”¹⁸

Since Vatican II the myth that basic Catholic doctrine¹⁹ has changed is perpetuated by some. However, as Cardinal Bea stated it: “No Catholic of education will believe that the

¹³ www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/cvv-e.html#preface

¹⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994; 816 (In this paper the *Catechism*... numbers represent paragraphs, not pages.)

¹⁵ James Byrne, *Threshold of God's Promise, An Introduction to the Catholic Pentecostal Movement*, 69.

¹⁶ Augustin Cardinal Bea, Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Way to Unity After the Council*, 1967, 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸ Dave Hunt, *Global Peace And The Rise Of Antichrist*, 1990, 149. (For an excellent treatment of the Roman Catholic official position as presented by Pope John Paul II, read his 1995 Encyclical “That They May Be One.”)

¹⁹ Two excellent sources on Roman Catholic doctrines are: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (New York: Doubleday, 1994) and James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome...*, (Eugene OR: Harvest House Publishers), 1995.

Council can or would change even a single dogma... and no love for the separated brethren can induce us to lay even the lightest hand on the sacred deposit of faith.”²⁰ “What the Church is prepared to do is to take... a more imaginative and contemporary presentation of these fixed positions,”²¹ and pursue a “sympathetic study of the situation of non-Catholic Christians, of their inspirations and positive achievements, their mentality and language.”²² And they are to do so while holding to an “unequivocal and unreserved affirmation of Catholic doctrine.”²³

This is consistent with Vatican II declarations: “Bishops should show affectionate consideration in their relations with the separated brethren... encouraging ecumenism as it is understood by the Church.”²⁴ “This sacred Council urges the faithful to abstain from any frivolous or impudent zeal, for these can cause harm to true progress toward unity. Their ecumenical activity cannot be other than fully and sincerely Catholic, that is, loyal to the truth we have received from the Apostles and the Fathers, and in harmony with the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed....”²⁵ In a message to a gathering of bishops in Chicago, Pope John Paul II touched on his view of ecumenism: ‘With God’s help we will continue to work humbly and resolutely to remove the real divisions that still exist, and thus to restore the full unity in the faith...’ At the same time, the Pope affirmed his faithfulness to the Catholic doctrine — something not to be compromised in the push for ecumenism. He quoted Pope Paul VI, who said, ‘Let the work of drawing near to our separated brethren go on, with much understanding, with much patience, with great love: but without deviating from true Catholic doctrine.’”²⁶

Any so-called “change” has not been in doctrinal matters of “the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed.” Apparently, any changes have been superficial — to make the Catholic Church more “user-friendly.” Protestants are now referred to as “separated brethren” rather than “heretics.” All those “who have been justified by faith in Baptism” are even said to be “accepted as brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church.”²⁷ Catholics are learning to use traditional evangelical terminology to express their unchanged Catholic faith. (i.e. The same words are used but with different meanings.) The Mass can be conducted in national languages instead of Latin — and with the priest facing the congregation. Ecumenical “dialogue” with non-Catholics is permissible (even encouraged) — but under strict guidelines. These and other minor changes have and will contribute toward the Catholic goal of luring the “separated brethren” back into the “one fold... under one Shepherd.” But due to its claimed, “infallible Sacred Tradition,” any ecumenical return to Catholicism must, of necessity, be on Rome’s terms. And any union with Rome

²⁰ Cardinal Bea, Cited in H. M. Carson, *The New Catholicism*, p. 23. This “deposit of faith” includes, among other things, all decrees proposed by the Magisterium in all 21 Ecumenical Councils. Such “Sacred Tradition” is “for belief as being divinely inspired” and constitutes a part of “the Word of God.” See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 97, 884, 891.

²¹ Cardinal Bea, as quoted by T. A. McMahon, “Why It Matters, Part 2,” *The Berean Call*, Nov. 1999.

²² Cardinal Bea, *The Way to Unity After the Council*, 111-112.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 1975, 465-466.

²⁵ Ibid, 470.

²⁶ *Christianity Today*, 11/2/79.

²⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994; 818, 1271.

will necessitate theological compromise on the part of “separated brethren.” It is difficult to see how or why any true believers would do such a thing.

Rome’s strategy has paid off for her benefit. After some 30 years of dialogue, on 10/31/99 representatives of the Lutheran World Fellowship and the Catholic Church signed a “Lutheran — Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.” Excerpts include these: “Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works... Through Christ alone are we justified, when we receive this salvation in faith... Justification takes place solely by God’s grace...”²⁸ Such documents can be signed between two parties who actually differ theologically because each side defines identical terms differently.

It helps to know how terms are defined.²⁹ In Catholic teaching: “No one can get to heaven without grace. You get grace through the [seven] Sacraments.”³⁰ The authoritative 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that the sacraments “confer the grace that they signify.” (1127) They “are necessary for salvation.” (1129) Through them “divine life is dispensed to us.” (1131) The Roman Catholic claim remains that: “Outside the [Roman Catholic] Church there is no salvation.” One “could not be saved who... would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.” (846) Those “Justified by faith in baptism... are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians....” (1271) Baptism (infant or adult) “is a bath that purifies, justifies, and sanctifies.” (1227) The “sacrament of Penance is necessary for salvation for those who have fallen after Baptism, just as Baptism is necessary for salvation for those who have not yet been reborn [born again].” (980) “Indeed bishops and priests by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive sins....” (1461) “Absolution takes away sin....” (1459) The Eucharist “Holy Communion... preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism.” (1392) It unites us with Christ while “at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins.” (1393) “Being obedient she [Mary] became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race” (493) and “by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation.” (969) “In Mary she [the Church] is already all-holy.” (867)

Such statements of Catholic doctrine proclaim a “different gospel — which is *really* not another;” (Gal. 1:6-7 NASB) And the curse of Gal. 1:8-9 applies to any who preach such a “gospel.” Unfortunately, numerous prominent “evangelicals” as well as liberals are becoming convinced that “Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ.”³¹ Such a statement represents the obvious fruit of theological dialogue and compromise in recent years. Such a belief understandably will make it easier for evangelicals to move toward union with Rome. Some true believers are no doubt identified as Roman Catholics. But if so, they must

²⁸ www.christiantruth.com/lutheranrcjointdeclaration.html

²⁹ Any good Catholic dictionary, encyclopedia, or catechism will show us how terms (such as grace, justification, faith, sanctification, sacraments, merit, Church, baptism, communion, new birth, sin, Word of God, etc.) are understood so differently by Catholics and us.

³⁰ Parish Priests; *Instructions in the Catholic Faith*, 1974, 85.

³¹ See “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium,” March 29, 1994. Jack Van Impe is an example of one who now very strongly claims that “all Christians from all denominations, including our wonderful Catholic brothers and sisters are members of that one body, for by one Spirit are we all, all baptized into one body....” TBN Show January 27, 1999. www.geocities.com/~contenders/pope.html

have no knowledge and/or trust in the Catholic means of salvation. The Biblical Gospel of Grace is antithetical to “the Gospel According to Rome.”

3. THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT IN RELATION TO NEW EVANGELICALISM

Harold J. Ockenga is often referred to as “the father of New Evangelicalism”³² having first used the term in 1948. Besides new evangelicalism’s distinction from modernism and neo-orthodoxy, as Ockenga said, “It differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of [ecclesiastical] separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas of life. Neo-evangelicals emphasized the restatement of Christian theology in accordance with the need of the times, the reengagement in the theological debate, the recapture of denominational leadership, and the reexamination of theological problems such as the antiquity of man, the universality of the Flood, God’s method of creation and others.”³³

New evangelicalism’s “determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day” has obvious reference to liberals. Sadly, dialogue with liberals, and especially with such goals in mind inevitably leads to the tragic results of theological compromise.³⁴ Even by 1976, a leading New Evangelical spokesman was deeply concerned when he wrote that: “More and more organizations and individuals historically committed to an infallible Scripture [held by new evangelicals in 1948] have been embracing and propagating the view that the Bible has errors in it. This movement away from the historic standpoint has been most noticeable among those often labeled Neo-evangelicals. This change of position with respect to the infallibility of the Bible is widespread and has occurred in evangelical denominations, Christian colleges, theological seminaries, publishing houses, and learned societies.”³⁵ Any departure from inerrancy is a move toward liberalism. And a move toward liberalism is a move toward ecumenical union.

By 1984 another evangelical scholar expressed similar warnings: “Within the evangelical circles things are moving rapidly in the direction of what happened fifty years ago in the denominations ... There is a growing infiltration of humanistic ideas into theology and practice. There is a growing acceptance of pluralism and accommodation. And what has been the response of the evangelical leadership? Overwhelmingly it has been to keep silent, to let the slide go further and further, to paper over the differences.”³⁶ This still applies today and “to paper over the differences” is the compromise that makes ecumenical union possible.

One example of such compromise is this: In the 1940’s, “Many individual congregations

³² Earnest D. Pickering, *The Tragedy of Compromise, The Origin and Impact of the New Evangelicalism*. We are using Ockenga’s *New Evangelical* label even though it may be true that “today we speak of this branch of conservative Christianity simply as the Evangelical movement.” Mark Ellingsen, *The Evangelical Movement*, 1988, 101. Cited in Pickering, *The Tragedy of Compromise...*, 96.

³³ Harold J. Ockenga, “Forward,” Harold Lindsell, *The Battle For The Bible*, 1976.

³⁴ This is documented in numerous writings, even by New Evangelicals. One is Harold Lindsell, *The Battle For The Bible*, 1976.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁶ Francis Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, 1984, 88. Cited in Pickering, *The Tragedy of Compromise*, 95.

whose denominations were in the Federal Council of Churches were received into the National Association of Evangelicals in order to articulate their conviction and give them opportunity of cooperative action on an evangelical and orthodox base.”³⁷ Now, more recently, the National Association of Evangelicals decided “to drop its by-law prohibiting member denominations from joint membership in the National Council of Churches... The 1943 constitutional convention of the National Association of Evangelicals stated that the Federal Council [National Council of Churches since 1950] lacked ‘a positive stand on the essential doctrines of the Christian faith,’ included leaders who had repudiated those doctrines, and actively supported apostate institutions... The National Association of Evangelicals motto has been ‘cooperation without compromise.’ [But] ...If admitting National Council of Churches members to the National Association of Evangelicals is not compromise, what is?”³⁸

Evangelicals have been increasingly involved with liberals and Catholics in ecumenical (or “cooperative”) evangelism — mostly since the 1957 Billy Graham crusade in New York City.³⁹ Praise God for all those who have been saved through this or other ecumenical evangelistic efforts. Sadly, the signers of decision cards are encouraged to go back into the church of their choice — even if liberal, charismatic or Catholic. As a result of this policy, such churches that participate, usually benefit numerically. For example, in the 1957 New York City campaign, the liberal “Marble Collegiate Church, pastored by Norman Vincent Peale... received the most decision cards of any New York Church.”⁴⁰

Believers should question involvement in ecumenical evangelism with liberals, charismatics or Roman Catholics. Such efforts tend to muddy the waters of biblical doctrine making it more difficult for immature believers to distinguish truth from error. Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel to the lost, not to “dialogue” with them in a “common search for truth.”

4. THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT IN RELATION TO THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

It is probably true that: “In the past two [now three] decades, the most ecumenical force in the world has been the Pentecostal-Charismatic-renewal movement.”⁴¹ Although Pentecostalism has been with us for a century, the charismatic movement started around 1960 largely through the Pentecostal influence of a man, David duPlessis, a book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, by David Wilkerson and a group, the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International. DuPlessis “was the first Pentecostal to engage in dialogue with both the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church... [He] served as the most important and consistent bridge between the Pentecostals and the rest of the Christian church

³⁷ Harold John Ockenga, “Resurgent Evangelical Leadership, *Christianity Today*, Oct. 10, 1960, 14-15. (from Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation: The Struggle for a Pure Church*, 1979, 121-122).

³⁸ R. Albert Mohler Jr., “Uncommon cause,” *World*, March 25, 2000, 25.

³⁹ Harold Ockenga clearly identified Billy Graham as “the spokesman of the convictions and ideals of the new evangelicalism.” George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 167. Cited in Pickering, *The Tragedy of Compromise*, 50. (“The general Crusade Committee was composed of about 120 modernists and unbelievers and about twenty fundamentalists.” *Ibid.*, 55).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Synan and Rath, *Launching the Decade of Evangelization*, 1990, 162-163.

world.”⁴²

From those early beginnings, by 1990, it was estimated that there were more than 372 million Pentecostals and Charismatics, 21.4 % of Christians worldwide.⁴³ And these represent almost every branch of Christianity. “Dr. Kevin M. Ranaghan..., a Catholic, was chairman of the ecumenical planning committee [for the 1977 Kansas City Conference on Charismatic Renewal in the Christian Churches]. ... Speaking at the opening session... Ranaghan called the charismatic renewal ‘the largest grassroots ecumenical movement in 800 years.’ He pointed out that divisions among the various churches have been a serious scandal to the world and he told the [50,000 +] crowd in the football stadium: ‘For the world to believe depends on our becoming one.’ ...At a wrap-up press conference... Ranaghan called the conference ‘a major step forward on the road to Christian unity. Our vision in the planning stages of the conference was that God would bring us together as who we are — Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Pentecostals and members of other churches — and manifest through our mutual fellowship and love the fact that unity in the Spirit is real today... We hope our experience will be an encouragement to all Christians to press on in the quest for unity in love, mindful of the responsibility we all have to be one so that our nation may come to know that Jesus is Lord.’”⁴⁴ It is no doubt true that: “The tongues experience seems to serve as a bridge over the chasm of theological difference.”⁴⁵

An example of this “chasm of theological difference,” is charismatic Ranaghan’s expression, “The American Roman Catholic Church, as a whole and in each of its parts, is in the Body of Christ. All the millions of members of this Church are in fact members of the Body of Christ. They belong to the People of God, and Jesus is their Lord. The continual and clear teaching of our Lord through the Church is that a person becomes a member of Christ and is given the gift of the Holy Spirit when he is baptized.”⁴⁶ And now numerous evangelical leaders and their followers apparently agree with Ranaghan since they have come to believe that “Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ.” If this be true, as they say, then what can possibly be so wrong with uniting together for evangelism and other purposes?

Catholics, or anyone else, are not in the Body of Christ through water baptism. The salvation of Catholics (“evangelical,” charismatic or not) who still believe in Roman Catholic doctrine (especially regarding salvation) should be questioned. There is no basis for uniting with them. We should desire that our dear Catholic friends embrace the true Gospel of grace and place their trust in the finished work of Christ *alone* for salvation.

The charismatic movement has influenced the “signs and wonders movement”⁴⁷ of the

⁴² Ibid., 163.

⁴³ Ibid., 56-57 (Statistics gathered by David Barrett, ed. of *World Christian Encyclopedia*, and the Lausanne Statistical Task Force).

⁴⁴ Synan and Rath, Ibid., 117, 122.

⁴⁵ J. R. Ensey, *The Pentecostal Herald*, Nov, 1972.

⁴⁶ K. Ranaghan, *The Lord the Spirit and the Church*, p. 26. (See James Neher, *A Christian’s Guide to Today’s Catholic Charismatic Movement*, 1983. It’s a good source for topicalized quotes on Catholic charismatic’s trust in Catholic teaching on sacramental salvation by baptism, penance, Eucharist, works, sufferings, prayers of / to Mary and the saints, etc.).

⁴⁷ See the paper on the Spiritual Warfare Movement.

“Third Wavers” estimated by 1990 to number some 33 million evangelicals.”⁴⁸ And this movement in turn has had some impact on the World Christian Movement and world missions. But we need to remember our Lord’s words that: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven... Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you” (Matt. 7:21-23).⁴⁹

5. THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT IN RELATION TO THE WORLD CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

It may be that those who started using the World Christian Movement tag in recent times, were/are thinking of the World Christian Movement as simply the worldwide expansion of Christianity throughout church history.⁵⁰ However, this paper is only concerned with the World Christian Movement as it relates to the modern ecumenical movement. Over the past few decades the World Christian Movement has developed into a vast ecumenical-minded, worldwide network of Christian organizations dedicated to world evangelization. The primary focus of each organization depends on how they would define “world evangelization.” Here in the USA the World Christian Movement tag is often associated with the Fuller School of World Mission⁵¹ and/or the US Center for World Mission in California. The latter’s *Mission Frontiers* publication has consistently placed its focus on unevangelized people-groups around the world. And in recent years the World Christian Movement has emphasized world evangelization by AD 2000 (and beyond).

Much of the World Christian Movement activity has been carried out by evangelicals who love the Lord and share with us the same passion for reaching the lost before it is everlastingly too late. And consequently multiplied thousands have no doubt been born into the family of God through ministries of those associated with the World Christian Movement. In this we greatly rejoice. If the World Christian Movement label includes all those involved in what is called “world evangelization,” then we, along with many other fine mission groups, must be a part of the World Christian Movement.

However, there are reasons to be reluctant to identify with the World Christian Movement through a close relationship with either Fuller School of World Missions or US Center for World Mission and related movements. The reason that is pertinent for this particular paper is the World Christian Movement’s involvement in the ecumenical movement of our times. What has been stated in the previous four sections of this paper also applies to the World Christian Movement because many World Council of Churches denominations, Roman

⁴⁸ Synan and Rath, *Ibid.*, 56-57. (See also the paper on “The Spiritual Warfare Movement.”)

⁴⁹ See the paper on The Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement for more information.

⁵⁰ At least Winters understands that Roman Catholic worldwide expansion was a big part of the World Christian Movement during the medieval period. He wrote that the “harmony between the modality [parish/diocese] and the sodality [orders/monasteries] achieved by the Roman Church is perhaps the most significant characteristic of this phase of the world Christian movement and continues to be Rome’s greatest organizational advantage to this day.” Ralph Winter, “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission,” *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, A Reader*, 3rd Edition, 1999 (Winters and Hawthorne, eds.), p. 225. [This Reader is a good source of information on missiology in general and on the World Christian Movement in particular].

⁵¹ Fuller School of World Missions is described by Ralph Winter as “the world’s largest faculty of missions.” *Mission Frontiers*, June 2000, 5.

Catholics, charismatics and *other* “evangelicals” are all involved in “world evangelization.” Each of the four groupings to some extent overlap with all the others and are made up of “Christians” united by the common goal of world evangelization. Many of these organizations have been mutually influenced (through dialogue, networking, and joint participation) toward a more ecumenical position. The World Christian Movement seems to be an increasingly, wide-reaching continuation of the ecumenical movement within missions — which is where the ecumenical movement started in the first place. One leading missiologist has written that, “more than any other force, the cause of missions unites an enormous variety of otherwise separate church traditions.”⁵²

The 1974 International Congress On World Evangelization was ecumenical. “About two-fifths of the evangelicals who attended belonged to churches which were affiliated with the World Council of Churches... Roman Catholic participants were prominent, including Benjamin Tonna, the Coordinator of Evangelism for the Vatican.”⁵³ By the 1989 second International Congress On World Evangelization in Manila, “...charismatics and non-charismatics joined hands and worshipped together. Roman Catholics and Orthodox were welcomed as participants and treated as equals... [There was] a softening of its hitherto hard-line stance toward the World Council of Churches. An olive branch was extended to the ecumenical movement.”⁵⁴

From International Congress On World Evangelization 1974 came the “Lausanne Covenant” which was “agreed upon by 2000-3000 people from 150 nations from all branches of the Christian Church...”⁵⁵ From the perspective of an “evangelical” Catholic, “The point behind the Lausanne Covenant is that the task of evangelism is unfinished and that all Christians must come together on their common beliefs to spread the Gospel... Lausanne has reached out to Christians of every church communion. Their efforts to bring Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox together have not been easy... [But] they are committed to a genuinely evangelical ecumenical global outreach”⁵⁶ The 1989 “Manila Manifesto” of Lausanne II affirmed the “continuing commitment to the Lausanne Covenant.” From the perspective of the liberal *Christian Century*, the document was “a broadly based affirmation of evangelical faith and witness [which] made clear that many conservative Protestants were ready to shed the fundamentalist baggage that had prevented them from participating fully in the life of the worldwide church.”⁵⁷ Consistent with this, a leading spokesman stated, “There are six saving acts of God in Jesus Christ... The Incarnation... the Cross... the Atonement... the Resurrection... the ascension... Pentecost... the Second Coming of Christ. Now all these churches (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Evangelicals, Orthodox, Pentecostals) believe in all these six saving acts... Let us make it our unflinching goal to

⁵² Ralph Winter, “Join the World Christian Movement,” *Perspectives...*, 720.

⁵³ Pickering, *The Tragedy of Compromise*, 40, 58.

⁵⁴ Richard Pierard, “Lausanne II: Reshaping World Evangelicalism,” *Christian Century*, August 1989, 740. Pickering, *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁵ Tom Houston, “Cooperation in Evangelism and the Lausanne Covenant,” *Mission Frontiers*, Jan-Feb, 1989, 12. (Houston has served terms as Director of The British and Foreign Bible Society and President of World Vision International and was also an International Congress On World Evangelization speaker).

⁵⁶ Keith A. Fournier, *Evangelical Catholics*, 1990, 203-204. Fournier is a charismatic Roman Catholic ecumenical leader.

⁵⁷ Richard Pierard, “Lausanne II: Reshaping World Evangelicalism,” *Christian Century*, 16-23 Aug. 1989, p.740 — Quoted in Pickering, 48.

stay together... as reflected in the Lausanne Covenant.”⁵⁸

From the 1988 Lausanne Global Consultation on World Evangelization a Working Group was formed and developed “A Kaleidoscopic Global Action Plan” for world evangelization by AD 2000 and beyond. They compiled a list of 186 goals “each of which represents a statement of what closure means in one or more of the 300 different and distinct dimensions of the concept ‘evangelization’ ...and then made the recommendation “that we Great Commission Christians decide, announce, and proclaim that all these goals are our legitimate goals, and that we intend to press for the implementation of all of them...”⁵⁹ One of the goals listed stated this: “Enthuse all prayer-oriented or contemplative brothers and sisters, monks and nuns, to regain past monastic enthusiasm for world evangelization and to rededicate monasteries and convents worldwide by 2000 to prayer support for the Great Commission task...”⁶⁰ This is no doubt partially the result of appointing to the Working Group men like Fr. Tom Forrest,⁶¹ an ecumenical Catholic priest and Vinson Synon, a Pentecostal ecumenist.

Many prominent, influential, evangelical leaders joined with some Catholic leaders to form the 1994 ecumenical declaration, “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium,” In part, it read, “As we near the Third Millennium, there are approximately 1.7 billion Christians in the world. About a billion of these are Catholics and more than 300 million are Evangelical Protestants... We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ... All who accept Christ as Lord and Savior are brothers and sisters in Christ. Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ... There is one church because there is one Christ and the church is his body... Evangelicals and Catholics attempt to win ‘converts’ from one another’s folds... In many instances... such efforts at recruitment undermine the Christian mission by which we are bound by God’s Word and to which we have recommitted ourselves in this statement... There is a necessary distinction between evangelizing and what is today commonly called proselytizing or ‘sheep stealing.’ ... In view of the large number of non-Christians in the world and the enormous challenge of our common evangelistic task, it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one community to proselytize among active adherents of another Christian Community... Also to be rejected is the practice of comparing the strengths and ideals of one community with the weaknesses and failures of

⁵⁸ Tom Houston, then director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, speaking in a plenary session of Lausanne II in Manila in 1989 — as quoted by Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, 1994, 415.

⁵⁹ Kaleidoscopic Global Action Plan (1990 Global Evangelization Movement) — as quoted in James Dager, “The World Christian Movement — Part 2,” *Media Spotlight*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 17.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Fr. Forrest, who directs Rome’s “New Evangelization 2000” from the Vatican, spoke to a Catholic-only audience at “Indianapolis 1990,” an ecumenical charismatic conference on “The Holy Spirit and World Evangelization.” He said, “Our job is to make people as richly and as fully Christian as we can make them by bringing them into the Catholic Church... we have to be evangelizing into The Church. ... No, you don’t just invite someone to become a Christian, you invite them to become Catholics... Why would this be so important? ...there are seven sacraments, and the Catholic Church has all seven. ...On our altars we have the body of Christ, we drink the blood of Christ. As Catholics we have Mary... Queen of Paradise... As Catholics — now I love this one — we have purgatory. Thank God! I’m one of those people who would never get to the beautiful Vision without it. It’s the only way to go. ...our job is to use the remaining decade evangelizing everyone we can into the Catholic Church ...and into the third millennium of Catholic history.” Cited in David Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, 9-10.

another.”⁶² Besides using identical terminology, but with different meanings, such statements are also made “by focusing on the core beliefs of all true Christians so that adherents of both major traditions can work together in the common task of evangelizing the non-believing world.”⁶³ As such views continue to spread among evangelicals, it will increasingly be more politically and religiously incorrect to either witness to our dear Roman Catholic friends and/or express our own views on Roman Catholic doctrine.

Such statements by the Evangelicals and Catholics Together should cause concern. It is sad to see this evangelical repudiation of what God did during the Reformation. Doctrinal error should be exposed. And the best way to expose error is by teaching Truth. Only the 66 books of sacred Scripture are the written Word of God. Those whose hope for a salvation that is NOT by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone are lost and in need of the Savior. Sincere, religious people who “have a zeal for God” and are “going about to establish their own righteousness” are still lost (Rom. 10:1-3)! Those who are lost are the “mission field.” We should be compelled to lovingly share the Good News with them that they may be saved.

It is quite evident that in the World Christian Movement, evangelism is only one part of “evangelization.” Prior to the first International Congress On World Evangelization, the Bishop A. Jack Dain of the Anglican Church in Sydney, Australia, who served as Executive Chairman of International Congress On World Evangelization stated: “Lausanne is a Congress on evangelization and not a Congress on evangelism... we need not only to think of evangelism, that is, the proclamation of the Gospel, but the whole task given to us by the risen Christ. This, I think, more aptly, is called ‘evangelization.’⁶⁴ The “whole task” of “evangelization” was stated in the Lausanne Covenant as “we affirm that evangelism and sociopolitical involvement are both part of our Christian duty... The message of Salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist...”⁶⁵ This “sociopolitical involvement” as a part of world evangelization is bringing together a wide variety of “Christian” activists. It all contributes to the ecumenical spirit of the age.

Leaders in The Global Evangelization Movement, which is no doubt a part of the World Christian Movement, have spelled out quite clearly what they consider to be “Today’s Megapriorities for World Missions.” A list of 31 megapriorities is preceded by this statement: “Great Commission Christians targeting their total energies toward Christ’s world mission are concerned to see that solutions to all these problems are found, rapidly. Many problems, perhaps most, can be dealt with by political, governmental or corporate entities but require Christian activists to galvanize them. Other problems are strictly the

⁶² Besides all the Catholic representatives, many notable evangelicals were signatories. Among them were Bill Bright — CCC, Charles Colson — PF, Kent Hill — E. Nazarene, Larry Lewis — SBC, Jesse Miranda — AOG, Brian O’Connell — WEF, John White — Geneva C. and National Association of Evangelicals, Richard Mouw — Fuller T. S., Mark Noll — Wheaton C., J.I. Packer — Regent C., and Pat Robertson — Regent U, and many others). For full text and analysis of this historic document and its sequel, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together 2*, see http://www.aomin.org/Evangelical_and_Catholics_Together.html.

⁶³ Colson and Neuhaus, eds., *Evangelicals and Catholics Together Toward a Common Mission*, (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1995), 36.

⁶⁴ A Jack Dain, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *The Lausanne Story*, (Charlotte, NC: 1987), 13.

⁶⁵ From the “Lausanne Covenant,” *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Third Edition, 1999, 760.

responsibility of Christians, either individually or collectively.” The list starts with these: “1. Solving world hunger, 2. Abolishing global poverty, 3. Readying disaster aid and relief, 4. Redistributing/sharing wealth worldwide, 5. Neutralizing structures of sin, 6. Saving the environment..., 7. Upholding human rights.”⁶⁶ Those with “a “holistic perspective on world mission” understand Christ’s commands to include “nothing less than to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless... [and] nothing less than responsible stewardship of the earth He gave us to live on, including the water, air and other natural resources.”⁶⁷ They are in part “striving to work with Him to restore the intended goodness and beauty of His creation... [and inviting] all good people of every nation to view and to participate in the final assault on the powers of darkness...”⁶⁸

Unfortunately, most of this sociopolitical activism toward solving the world’s problems is related more to “globalization” than “evangelization.”

It also appears that much of the World Christian Movement social and political activism is based on a postmillennial understanding of the Kingdom. At times it sounds like Christian Reconstructionism.⁶⁹ It is said that “the Kingdom of God is to be a witness to all nations... It is among us and within us... [We are] commissioned to bring the Gospel of the Kingdom to the ends of the earth... The resources of the Kingdom must be targeted to influence the arts and entertainment, education, media, the church, commerce, family and government. As we go to serve, we will realize the inheritance Jesus promised when He prayed, ‘Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth.’”⁷⁰ It even includes “the preservation of our earth home” and necessitates a “whole-life stewardship [which] begins with the agenda of the Kingdom of God. ...God is working in history to establish His loving reign on earth...”⁷¹ We are even being told that we “must encourage talented Christians to become part of the motion picture industry. ...[thus] claiming the powerful art form of film and TV entertainment and redeeming it for the Kingdom of God.”⁷² One has expressed: “I am sure God wants us to take part in politics, and today, as yesterday, new Josephs will arise to save the earth from ruin.”⁷³ However, this won’t happen until our Lord Jesus comes to reign on earth.

If, as we are told, that the “Christian Church must be committed to meeting the physical needs of today’s world,”⁷⁴ and that doing so is a big part of “the holistic perspective of world mission,” then most certainly it will have to be an ecumenical effort of stupendous proportions. And numerous organizations, including missions, which believe this to be true, are cooperating and uniting to complete this task of “discipling the nations” with the view toward “changing the world” and “establishing the Kingdom of God.” The contribution all this will make in the ecumenical movement was alluded to by Pope Paul VI: “Christians

⁶⁶ Frank Kaleb Jansen, *Target Earth, the necessity of diversity in a holistic perspective in world mission*, (YWAM’s University of the Nations and Global Mapping International, 1989), 5.

⁶⁷ Ralph D. Winter, “Foreword,” *Target Earth...*, 4.

⁶⁸ <http://www.gem-werc.org/gd/gd21.htm> [8/29/00]

⁶⁹ See the paper on The Christian Reconstruction Movement (CRM).

⁷⁰ Frank K. Jansen, “Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be Done on Earth,” *Target Earth...*, 102.

⁷¹ Tom Sine, A Call to Whole Life Stewardship For Century 21,” *Target Earth...*, 84.

⁷² Rick Thompson, “Entertainment,” *Target Earth...*, 73.

⁷³ Frank K. Jenson, “In God We Trust,” *Target Earth...*, 138.

⁷⁴ Paul Hawkins, “Education: Whose Responsibility?” *Target Earth...*, 46.

should work together in the use of every possible means to relieve the afflictions of our times, such as famine and natural disasters, illiteracy and poverty, lack of housing and the unequal distribution of wealth. Through such cooperation, all believers in Christ are able to learn easily how they can understand each other better and esteem each other more, and how the road to unity of Christians may be made smooth.”⁷⁵

We are committed to the task of world evangelization. Our primary focus has been on evangelism and planting indigenous churches which could and would reproduce. We consider evangelism and evangelization to be the same thing. We are also assisting those among whom we labor in many varied ways — apart from our church-planting ministries. However we haven’t thought of these things, such as community development, medical work, etc., as “evangelization.” We are not opposed to Christian involvement in social and political efforts to combat abortion, save the rain forest, prevent global warming, and clean up the environment etc. But such efforts are resulting in uniting a vast multitude of “evangelicals” (with their time, money and talents) with other diverse “Christian” groups in the full-time pursuit of objectives that, in many cases, seem to have so little relation to “world evangelization.” And such ecumenical cooperation in sociopolitical activism tends toward ecumenical union in the more church-related pursuits.

CONCLUSION

The ecumenical movement is related to all kinds of other movements.⁷⁶ And in each there is a wide range of opinions among those identified with the movements. This is why ecumenical unity: 1) must start with “dialogue” which will lead to compromise, and 2) has been so difficult to establish and maintain.⁷⁷ And because of all their differences, it is obviously not possible to speak for everyone in all the related movements. But we have tried to highlight only some of the views: 1) that are widely held by those within each movement, 2) that relate to the ecumenical issue, and 3) that should cause believers concern.

The ecumenical efforts of the World Council of Churches are driven by the goal of uniting all Christian churches, Protestant and Catholic. The New Evangelicals and their evangelical successors, largely through dialogue with liberals and compromise, have become increasingly more pluralistic and ecumenical to where it is very difficult to define what an “evangelical” is or isn’t. Through the Vatican II Ecumenical Council and the subsequent ministries of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, the move toward union with Rome continues with increasing fervor. The Charismatic movement, which has so deeply impacted the World Council of Churches, Catholics and evangelicals, has probably contributed more toward ecumenical goals than any other one thing. And all the sincere efforts of the World Christian Movement (and its numerous related sub-movements) toward world evangelization through evangelism and/or sociopolitical activism, are also contributing to ecumenical goals. The theological compromise involved in these efforts,

⁷⁵ Wilson Ewin, *Under the New World Order*, 1996, 62.

⁷⁶ This paper touches upon a few of the main ones. But there are others as well. For example, the increasing ecumenical efforts through “globalism” toward: 1) uniting “all faiths” or religions together, 2) uniting all the world governments together and 3) uniting the world’s churches and/or religions with the world’s governments — all for the sake of world peace and prosperity, and in fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

⁷⁷ This can be verified by any research on the historical struggles within the WCC, the Charismatic Movement, the WEF/National Association of Evangelicals, Catholicism (Eastern Roman) since Vatican II and the World Christian Movement. It hasn’t been easy to find the “lowest common denominator for unity” theologically.

should be a cause of concern.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

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