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ECUMENICAL EVANGELISM

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It is doubtful that any aspect of Christian endeavor is nearer to the heart of God than the field of evangelism. According to Thayer the original word of "evangelist" in the New Testament means "a bringer of good tidings". He is one who proclaims the gospel of Christ to others. It follows therefore, that the work of evangelism is the work of winning souls, and edifying the saints of God. *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."* Ephesians 4:11. While this verse indicates that God has called some men for the field of evangelism, every Christian is or should be an evangel of the Gospel. This being true, every Christian should be concerned about the field of evangelism.

In the past decade or so the field of evangelism has undergone a tremendous change. Certain policies have crept into various groups which profess a great love for evangelism, but at the same time are not willing to maintain what many of us feel is a Scriptural application of it. An ecumenical spirit which would unite in fellowship unbelievers with believers is attempting to dominate the field of evangelism. This modern emphasis on Ecumenical Evangelism is being promoted

primarily by a group which call themselves "New-evangelicals," or "Neo-evangelicals." This term was coined by one of the "high-priests" of the movement, Dr. Harold John Ockenga, pastor of the Park Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts. In stating the purpose for this new movement, Dr. Ockenga said that its purpose was to break with neo-orthodoxy, modernism, and fundamentalism. As the years have passed since Dr. Ockenga stated his purpose, history has revealed that the Neo-evangelicals have become closer in fellowship with neo-orthodoxy, and modernism. The only part of their intention which they have kept has been to separate themselves from fundamentalists who refuse to cooperate with or organically join in fellowship with the modernists' camp.

The writer sincerely feels that few things in all of church history have done more harm to the defense of the faith than the confusing dilemma that has resulted from the Neo-evangelical position. It has done especial harm to the cause of evangelism.

No one denies that there were isolated cases where certain evangelists in the past had "blind spots" concerning a few liberals. But nothing in the past can compare with the wholesale cooperation which we are seeing in present-day Ecumenical Evangelism. Even though there was some cooperation between fundamentalists and liberals in the

past, it did not make it right then, and it does not give a valid excuse for it now. We do not base our principles of separation on the individual action of an evangelist of the past or present, but upon the unchanging principles of the Word of God.

There are specific reasons why Ecumenical Evangelism is wrong. Let us consider a few of them.

It Is Unscriptural.

This is, of course, the foremost reason for rejecting it. Until recent years, nearly all evangelicals were in agreement with the basic Scriptural principle as set forth in II Corinthians 6:14. *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers..."* No one had any difficulty interpreting this verse in the past. We all believed that the child of God was to keep himself from union with the unregenerate in every phase of life, especially marriage, business, and religious affiliation. It has only been in recent years that many of the New-evangelical "scholars" have declared that this is not a true interpretation of this passage. They do this deliberately in order to cover up an unscriptural alliance with rank modernists who help them promote their brand of evangelism. Even Dr. Philip E. Hughes, who is the British Editorial Associate of **Christianity Today**, admits that this Scripture "is adopted and applied by Paul with the purpose of emphasizing the incongruity of believers being

paired with unbelievers...The metaphor of the yoke which he uses here shows that he is thinking of close relationships in which both parties are not true believers, Christian harmony cannot be expected to flourish and Christian consistency cannot fail to be compromised." (The New International Commentary). It is rather ironical that Dr. Hughes is an editor of **Christianity Today**, which is the official organ for the New-Evangelical movement. Its very policy of inclusive evangelism contradicts the fine comments of Dr. Hughes on II Corinthians 6:14.

Another Scripture which plainly condemns cooperation of evangelicals with modernists in evangelistic campaigns is Galatians 1:8. *"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."* This exhortation was given as a warning against the coddling and pampering of false teachers. Modernism is false doctrine, and it is damning souls all over the world. Yet, Ecumenical Evangelism advocates would have us link arms with such soul-destroyers and have a city-wide campaign! In the light of God's Word this is unthinkable! The Galatian Church had been guilty of letting false teachers fellowship with them and by this they gave the forces of Satan an opportunity to spread false doctrine among the people of the church. Paul said this was wrong then, and we say it is wrong now.

John unequivocally condemns co-operation with those who deny the doctrine of the Word of God. *"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."* II John 9-11.

Several things are clear in

this passage. First, we who believe in the Son of God are not to give aid in any way to those who deny Christ. We are not to encourage their work. Second, if we do aid or encourage them, God will consider us as a participant in the preaching of their false doctrine. The New-evangelicals have done their utmost to take the sting out of this passage, but they have utterly failed. The evangelical who will organize with an unbelieving modernist in an evangelistic campaign is by inference advocating the nefarious work of that modernist.

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that offer should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds:) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and

might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." II Peter 2:1-22.

I challenge anyone to read this chapter and not see how it applies to those of all ages who dare to deny the doctrines of the Word of God. Without question modernists are identified with those in this passage who because

of their "damnable heresies" shall "bring upon themselves swift destruction." When you cooperate with a modernist you are cooperating with one whose doctrines are sending him and his hearers to damnation! The appalling thing is that the New-evangelicals say this is all right.

For the sake of space we must let the above Scriptures suffice to substantiate our charge that Ecumenical Evangelism is unscriptural. Obviously there are a host of other Scriptures that are as applicable.

It Is Wrong In Principle.

The yoking of believers with unbelievers in an evangelistic campaign is wrong in principle. It is often said, "We reach more people for Christ by cooperating with modernists." This is presumption at best. Who can say this for a fact? Do those who say this claim that the Holy Spirit is not able to draw sinners to a Scripturally organized campaign? We contend, that more souls would be saved if this were the case. Many unsaved people who respond to the invitation at ecumenical meetings are dealt with by modernists who do not believe in the new birth. In nearly every case of this kind the would-be convert is sent away with a nice talk, but not shown the plan of salvation. To claim you have to cooperate with modernists to win souls is to use the fallacious argument that the end justifies the means. This is not Scriptural! This is one of the most base types of human philosophizing. Elijah did not organize a Greater Mount Carmel Campaign with the high-priests of the Baalites as chairmen in order to bring Israel back to God. No, he stood alone and God vindicated his separation from the false doctrinaires of his day. God can do the same for us today! Jesus did not organize a Greater Jerusalem Campaign with the high-priest of the Jews as the campaign chairman. No, He let the world know that He was in opposition to those false

religionists. May God raise up in this hour pastors and evangelists who will believe God for heaven-sent revival without compromise and cooperation with the modernists of our day! The Word of God has never told us to unite with unbelievers in order to win souls. God never commands us to violate one commandment in order to fulfill another.

It Is Unethical.

One New Evangelical spokesman recently lectured in a leading conservative seminary. When he allowed time for questions he was asked, "What do you do with the modernists you have cooperated with during an evangelistic campaign, after the campaign is over?" His reply was very revealing. He said, in essence, "We treat them like we did before the campaign. We do not fellowship with them." I say this attitude is cheap, dishonest, unethical, and fraudulent. It is wrong to "use" the modernists and give them the impression that we are in cooperation with them when deep down we are not. I can have no confidence in an evangelist or in pastors who do this. Yet, this very thing is being done in every ecumenical evangelistic campaign that takes place. Hundreds of evangelical pastors cooperate for a few weeks with modernists they have nothing to do with the rest of the time. Modernists cooperate with evangelicals they scoff at all other times. This deceitful system becomes so disgusting that it becomes a question as to who is using whom.

Ecumenical Evangelism is a colossal camouflage. It is the epitome of deceptive expedience. We all know that the Christ we worship and adore is not the Christ of modernism. The Bible we believe to be the infallible, inerrant Word of God is not considered as such by the modernists. The plan of redemption which we as fundamentalists and evangelicals believe has nothing in common with modernism. How blind can the New-evangelicals be when they

think they can reconcile these totally different theologies and call it evangelism?

It Is Wrong Because It Gives Comfort To The Enemies Of The Faith..

God had a righteous prophet in a man named Jehu. We see this prophet rebuking Jehoshaphat for forming an alliance with the enemy of God, wicked Ahab. This king had done many wonderful deeds, but all those deeds did not alter the fact that in this unholy alliance he was aiding the enemy. Jehu asked the embarrassing question, "*Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.*" II Chronicles 19:2.

There is a definite parallel in what Jehoshaphat did in centuries gone by and what the New-Evangelical movement is doing today. But nowhere in the Word of God has the Lord changed His attitude toward such action. In Ecumenical Evangelism we find evangelists preaching the gospel and winning souls, but they turn their converts over to modernists to be schooled and fed with pernicious doctrines which shall hinder any kind of spiritual growth. It does not make sense to turn the rearing of lambs over to wolves. The responsibility of the evangelist does not end with the winning of souls. He is partly responsible to God for what happens to the new convert after the campaign is over. One major duty which the evangelist has is to encourage the converts to join a church which is true to the Word of God. Ecumenical Evangelism does not agree with this position. It tells the convert, "Go to the church of your choice." The result of this has been that a great percentage, even a majority in many campaigns, of new converts have been channelled into modernistic churches, Roman Catholic Churches, Jewish Synagogues, and even into some of the cults. This clearly shows that the New-Evangelicals

and those who promote ecumenical evangelism do not have a clear understanding of their duty to not only win souls, but also to edify those they have led to the Lord. The making of a disciple is the Lord's business. The teaching of the new disciple is the responsibility of a New Testament Baptist Church. *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."* Matthew 28:19-20.

An ecumenical evangelist came to see me, and he asked how I set up my city-wide campaigns. I told him that I only allowed evangelical pastors who believed in the fundamentals of the faith to have anything official to do with the meeting. He said, "You have got to learn the new system." This man had worked with Billy Graham in several campaigns and was now on his own. He told me that he had learned from Graham that the best way to get a crowd was to put modernists as well as fundamentalists on the committees. I told him I would never do that. At the time of this conversation this evangelist was conducting a series of evangelistic services in a Baptist church whose pastor was a known modernist. I asked him if he knew he was preaching for a modernist. He replied, "Why certainly. But, you should see the crowds I am getting." Then he admitted to me that while in the study one night this modernist-pastor sat back in his chair with a pipe in his mouth and laughed as he said, "I do not believe a thing you are preaching in my pulpit this week, but you are getting a better crowd that I can get, so, go to it!" Now think for a moment. Do you think this evangelist was honoring God by bringing people into such a synagogue of Satan as this one, and encouraging an infidel-pastor by urging people to join this church? Jesus would not have done this.

Paul would not have done this. Obviously this is a violation of every Scriptural and common sense principle known to church history. It has been claimed by some that evangelists have on occasion done this in the past. If they did, it was wrong then and it is wrong now.